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MY DAY

(TR. MK. REG. U.S. PAT. OFF.)

By Eleanor Roosevelt

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NEW YORK, Thursday -- I hope that the recent excursion of a few Senators into the old and ancient alleys near the Capitol in Washington will have a more lasting effect than previous excursions have had.

When I first went to Washington in 1933, Mrs. Archibald Hopkins, who had worked to remove these alleys from the Washington scene ever since Woodrow Wilson was President, came to get me one day and insisted that we drive through many of them. Being a New Yorker, I was impressed at first by the fact that at least here the buildings were not so high and there was a chance for a little sun and air to permeate the filth and squalor. But I soon learned just how bad these alleys were. What crime was bred there, what disease spread from there and what seeds of delinquency were sown in those alley slums.

The question has never been decided whether a human being acquires more characteristics through heredity or through environment. Nevertheless I am quite sure that human beings who live in the Washington slums are conditioned to a great extent by their environment.

The greater number of people living in the slums of Washington are Negroes. There is always a housing shortage for them; they are always being crowded into houses which have been condemned and should be torn down. It is hard to believe, but most of Washington's slums has only outdoor sanitation and sometimes the only running water available is a faucet in the yard.

From these overcrowded rooms servants go out to work in comfortable houses. Children are cared for by women whose children go to segregated schools. Poor food and poor housing make these children a prey to many diseases and as they pass through the streets, or as their elders care for them at home and then go into other homes to work, the diseases may spread.

I only hope that the things the Senators saw will stay more lastingly in their minds than the impressions which I have seen Congressional groups gather before,

I remember a trip taken by a group of this kind to some of the Washington institutions. The members of Congress were horrified, but there are no votes in the District of Columbia and it is easy to forget people who are not voting constituents.

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In the death of Rabbi Stephen Wise this country has lost a fine and honorable citizen. He was a Zionist and devoted to Palestine and its development as a nation. He was, however, above all, a citizen of the United States and one that wanted this country to live up to the highest ideals.

I do not think he ever had been quite the same since his wife died, and undoubtedly life had become more or less of a burden. But to those he left behind -- his friends and co-workers and especially his children -- there will be a great void where the warmth of his spirit and his great personality will be sadly missed.

E. R.