

to save the home. The good, old-fashioned homes are going or gone; they were temples of affection, havens of peace and domestic joys, and, more than that, the foundation stones of the nations, the pillars of society; and it is nothing less than these we are losing fast, if we have not already lost them.

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Already the effects of the breaking-up are obvious. Parental control has become a rare thing in modern life in this country; and, too often the loss of reverence for parents means also the loss of respect for the laws of God. Laxity of morals goes hand in hand with the destruction of home life, and it is hardly rash to say that they are connected closely as effect and cause. The following passage from a Melbourne paper exhibits a terribly true picture of the conditions of life in our towns and cities to-day:—

"The girl (not to mention the child) of the present day has very little respect for parental authority. The mother who knows that her daughter, aged 16 or 17, is not at home in the evening, and has no further knowledge of her whereabouts, exclaims helplessly, 'What can I do? The girl earns her own money, and expects to have the spending of it, and she pays no attention to anything I say. If I ask her where she is going she tells me that if she cannot do as other girls do she will go and board somewhere else.' The most irate of parents has no threats which can alarm the independent young thing who catches the 8.35 to her office every morning with her latch key in her bag, and lands serenely up at the pay office on Friday. The girl's point of view is that she pays her way, just as her brother does, and no one questions his comings and goings, though he is out every night in the week. Why may not she be as free? A place upon a dull and chilly pinnacle has no charm for her. She has money in her purse, and an enquiring mind: she must get down into the arena, see all, hear all, know all."

She must know all! And, as the same writer observes, the sort of things she wants to know are exactly the things she ought not to know at all: "The 'flapper' who considers that 'she knows a thing or two' is not by no means referring to her knowledge of the French irregular verbs." Possibly the evil development affects girls more than boys; and it is exactly there the danger lies. The men may be reformed by good women who will make good wives, but what hope is there for the family when instead of a good wife or mother a man finds a partner whose knowledge and experience has been on the lines pursued by the modern "flapper" described in the foregoing quotation? When men are driven from home by the inanity and the folly of such wives, when they find themselves mated with women who are too cowardly and too sensual to fulfil the sacred duties of motherhood, then, indeed, family life is undermined and the only sure foundations of a people's welfare tottering; then the last hope of recovery and renewal is gone. One has but to open one's eyes to find the causes of this dissolution. The music-halls with their unhealthy tone, the poisonous picture-shows, so suggestive, so debasing, the spread of club-life, and the universal itch for travel and excitement, are all contributing towards the ruin of the home. And so far have things gone that thoughtful men are asking themselves if nothing can be done, if already it is not too late to restore homes in which parents shall love and respect each other, and children be trained in the fear and love of God and in the way of virtue. And in the welter of decadence which reminds one of the rottenness described by Juvenal before the crash of the Roman Empire there is complete evidence that our Empire is spreading to destruction from the same causes, and that only the revival of home-life can save it.

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Platitudes spoken by Ministers cannot save the homes. Empty moralisings about the beauty of virtue in the abstract are of about the same value as a ray of moonbeams. Cheap sentimentality has about as much influence on character as a porous plaster would have on a motor car. And, facing the matter squarely,

we must see that only a reformation of character can supply the antidote. Instead of the futile, vain, shallow "flapper" whose highest ideal in life is a joy-ride in a Ford car, and instead of the boys who break the Commandment which tells them that they must honor their parents and be subject to them, we want real women and real men, capable of facing difficulties and overcoming temptations, trained in a hard school to self-control, taught the secret of rising quickly if they do fall through human weakness, conscious of their duties as well as of their rights. Men and women have gone astray and they have to be brought back a long way. Our schools and our political pot-hunters have been blind guides. What is needed is a return to the old schools and to the old politicians—to schools which are fit to teach children how to become Christians instead of clever animals, to politicians who know what principles mean and how true men ought to stand by them. Character must be built up anew. And the one royal road to that result is to get back to the cardinal points regarding home-life and individual life by insisting on the proper education of the young people on religious lines. Any other schemes are as nugatory as fighting with shadows, and as ineffectual as beating the wind. Time has proved that to all thinking men; and thinking men ought to prove it to the figure-heads who pose in the Parliament of New Zealand.

NOTES

The Bible

There are books and books, but the Bible remains eternally *The Book*. How much we lose, what a treasure of intellectual and imaginative beauty we neglect, quite apart from its moral and doctrinal value, when we allow other books to come between us and the Bible! The religious-minded know better than any words can express what the Bible means to them; what strength, what consolation, what refreshment—taking the word in its etymological sense of making fresh again—they find in the sacred pages. For the sinner and for the saint, for the man of the world and for the sheltered soul of the cloister, the Bible is always new and always old, inexhaustible, wonderful, edifying. "If," says St. Gregory, "it comprehends mysteries capable of perplexing the most enlightened understandings, it also contains simple truths fit for the nourishment of the humble and the illiterate; it carries externally wherewith to nourish infants, and in its most secret recesses wherewith to fill the most sublime geniuses with admiration; like a river whose current is so shallow in certain parts that a lamb may cross it, and deep enough in others for an elephant to swim there."

Its Variety and Its Excellence

"How extraordinary," says Chateaubriand, "is that work which begins with Genesis and ends with the Apocalypse! which opens in the most perspicuous style and concludes in the most figurative language. May we not justly assert that in the books of Moses all is grand and simple, like the creation of the world and the innocence of the primitive mortals which he describes, and that all is terrible and supernatural in the last of the prophets, like that corrupt society and that consummation of the ages which the author has represented." It is unlike all other books. A score of authors, at different ages, composed it; nothing is common in their styles but their wonderful originality. Not only believers but unbelievers are drawn by it. It contains the whole philosophy of life, the answer to every riddle of the universe. Almost every book of the Scriptures gives us texts applicable to every occasion. In the Psalms especially, we find the whole gamut of the human soul swept by a master-hand. The Bible tells us of the beginning and the end of all things; it teaches the ignorant what scholars can only guess at apart from its light; all the wisdom and all the poetry of the ages are but broken gleams of its