

THE DECADENCE OF HOME LIFE.

(By Gene Stratton Porter.)

The only time I realise that I am past twenty is when I recall the picture of my childhood home, and think of the abounding joy we got from life in keeping a clean house, in entertaining our friends and relations, in making a picture on the landscape with our door, yard, and garden. I recall the pride we took in our orchard—a great square of apple trees facing the spring sky like a big, delicate, white blanket, around which the peach-blow beryler of pink was an exquisite sight.

Father took justifiable pride in pruning, trimming, and grafting; in having magnificent, juicy, big apples, fine plums, amber cherries, cling and free-stone peaches, white, yellow, and beet-red, many varieties of grapes, and beautiful vines and flowers, and bushes in the door yard, all contributing to make his home a lovely picture his family luxuriously fed. In this setting we spent our lives, seeing how much we could learn, how happy we could be, and to what extent we could help our neighbours. The greatest pride we took was not in how beautifully we could be dressed, nor to how many different places we could go to; it was seeing how much we could crowd into our brains, and how many of our friends we could attract to our home by making it a delightful place.

But to-day country youngsters hate their environment, because they feel that they are being defrauded of the lights and the music and the things that look to them like joy. They finish their day's work in the quickest way, in order to jump into an automobile and reach the picture show and the dance in the nearest village. In the cities, home, in too many cases, is merely a convenience where one goes to sleep, or finds shelter if one is ill, although frequently nobody at home has the time to bother with the sick, so one is bundled up and sent to the hospital. In the matter of finding entertainment in dance halls, picture shows, hotels, cafes, and resorts, we have gone, as a nation, to the limit.

Our boys, especially the boys of the city, are beginning to show in their physique, in their faces, in the apparent nerve strain, above all in brain power, that they are in no way fitted, physically or mentally, to cope with life as were their fathers.

Too big a percentage of the girls of both city and country prove by their size, their physique, and their mentality, that they are not the equals of their mothers even.

PARENTS SHOULD WAKE UP.

This hour and this minute is the time for parents to do the deepest thinking they have ever done in their lives! It lies with the fathers and mothers of the city to take the children who are young enough to be malleable, and once again begin the practice of teaching them that home is the best place on earth in which to entertain their friends and to have a good time; that father is the finest man in the world, a person to be respected and to be instantly obeyed; that mother is a precious possession, to be taken good care of in order that she may get joy from life for herself, and give to her children the deep pleasure that can be found in the wonderful things that can be done in a home.

WHY DO BABIES DIE?

Because one of the parents may be weak or diseased, or because the unborn infant is damaged by poisons circulating in the veins of the mother.

Excessive consumption of alcohol damages the health of both parents, and acts as a poison to the child.

It is the cause of many children dying, or—what is worse—growing up permanently defective in body and in mind.

Want of good mothering and of medical and nursing care, poverty, vice, ill feeding, insanitary dwellings, overcrowding—all these militate against the child.

Indulgence in alcohol intensifies these dangers therefore drink is justly regarded as a most deadly enemy to infant life.

A mother who takes no alcoholic drink before or after the birth of her little one gives the child a surer chance of life and health.

A father who, for the sake of wife and child, abstains from alcohol gives both a better chance.

Is it not worth while trying to secure this "better chance" for the children of our great country?

(The above is from a leaflet sent to us by the National Baby Week Council, London.)

LAMPS.

At a church service lately the subject was the virgins with well-filled lamps and those whose lamps went out early. If I had properly trained power of concentration, my mind would have attended to the speaker, not gone off suddenly to wonder what proportion of us were keeping our lamps well filled, ready for an election. Our lamps of personal interest and understanding in what is being done, I mean. Of personal work.

For to succeed in our election there is something needed more than prayer, or faith, or constant giving, and that is Work, in the sense of effort.

You may not appear to have the material at hand to work on.

You may live, as I happen to have been tumbled down, in a road where everyone's vote is safe.

But are you keeping your lamp of enthusiasm, of knowledge, of the facts of our case, burning, ready to help guide a neutral, or perhaps an outsider, or the other-sider who is sure to turn up any day now? There are so many newly come out here from the Old Country, and from other countries, who are of necessity strange to our work, and our point of view. But they are pretty sure to vote, if they are eligible, even if they "don't care much which side wins." Can you interest any one of them? Can you give him a personal interest in what your Union is doing? Not just ask for a subscription, but engage his interest. Tell a man how glad you were able to help, even a trifle, in the W.C.T.U. creche at the Dunedin Exhibition, after dragging a heavy baby about somewhere else where the Union hadn't managed one, and make him feel what a jolly good thing the W.C.T.U. is, apart from politics. Show something you are making for the Willard Home. Talk about the blessing the Sailors' Rest is where they have built it; share your eagerness to help build another, or any other public work the Union is doing. And even more, in any private help its members are all on the look-out to give, such as welcoming strangers.

If you want to win this election, keep your lamp of interest filled and burning, not only to help, but to interest someone else.

KATHERINE MERCER.