



Life, Literature and Education.

(Contributions on all subjects of popular interest are always welcome in this Department.)

THE HOME.

(A paper read by Mr. C. C. James, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, at the Women's Institute Convention, Guelph.)

Every ten years we have a general stock-taking in this Canada of ours, to see what our possessions are and to find out what progress we have been making. We count the people, and, if we have increased by a million or two, we reckon our growth accordingly. In this estimate alone we may be mistaken, for mere increase in numbers is no test of a nation's true growth. Then we go through the mills and factories and count the people there employed, the toilers, the employees, to see whether or not the great hives of industry have been showing signs of increasing business or "busy-ness." We value the machinery and the output, and note down the workers as so many "hands." And yet this wealth may be passing mainly into the possession and under the control of comparatively few people, and the nation as a whole not be receiving the greatest benefit of this expansion of work. We may go out into the rural parts, and number the horses and cattle and sheep and swine, and total up the output of wheat and hay, of butter and cheese, of apples and potatoes, and endeavor to satisfy ourselves thereby that our country is becoming richer.

We call all this reckoning a census, and each time we take stock of our people we endeavor to make it more complete. But, after we have taken it and analyzed it, we are not satisfied that it is complete, that it gives us that insight into the make-up or condition of the people that enables us rightly to judge whether we are making true progress or not. It is all right as far as it goes, but you see it is limited mainly to material things; it is concerned only with numbering, and measuring, and weighing, and valuing.

A CENSUS OF ANOTHER KIND.

There is something, there are many things, in our people that it does not, that it can not very well take cognizance of. It does not go below the surface and give us a reckoning of those elements of the inner man that go to make up the real elements of human kind. It tells us nothing as to patience, generosity, cheerfulness, sincerity, devotion to duty, and honesty—those qualities sometimes called homely virtues, that play so important a part in the life of every nation. This census may count the houses of the country, and classify them as to their material composition and their size, but it does not seem to step within and set forth the qualities of the homes. It would be well if once in a while our leaders and teachers, our men and women of science, could make a census of these great homely virtues, to see

whether, as a nation, we are making true growth, or whether, in the rush to increase our population by numbers, to add to our factories by increase of product, to broaden our acres, and pile up our cheese and bacon, and beef, and wheat, we are not, after all, overlooking the more important elements that enter into the very warp and woof of the nation's true constitution.

THE FOUNTAIN OF A NATION'S TRUE LIFE.

Let me ask you, What is the most important, the most influential building in any nation? You take me to the magnificent and imposing pile within which sits the highest tribunal of the country, the seat of government, the law-making force. But, within there may be gathered a lot of self-seeking and oppressive persons, enacting laws for their own selfish advantage, and not for the general good of the people. You take me to cathedrals, grand and impressive in their architecture, but lifeless and cold within. You take me to halls of justice, but the very name may be a contradiction of that which is administered therein. You take me to colleges and schools, but the teaching may be narrow, false, and unsatisfying. Halls of legislation, courts of justice, churches and colleges, factories and shops, stores and offices, do not in themselves represent the full life, the true life of a people; they are not the most important elements in the life of a people; they are secondary to and dependent upon the most important life which is to be found within the homes of the people. The home life is the fountain, is the source whence these others are derived. The life of the store and the office, the life of the factory and the shop, the life of the college and the church, the life of the court and the legislature, all comes originally from the home, and it is therefore a matter of supreme importance that the life of a nation shall start right, as it emanates from the home and permeates all these other avenues in which it finds expression. Make the homes right and all these others will become right; it cannot be otherwise. Start with the homes wrong, and you need not look for right things in the school, or store, or shop, or court, or legislature. All this has been put, and well put, in that old and well-known saying, as true to-day as at any other time, "The hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world."

THE POWER OF A NATION'S WOMEN.

Am I putting it too strongly when I say that you women of Canada are its true rulers, and that the improvement of this country, its uplifting, will come more surely through your improvement than through any other force? That you need improving, I am quite certain you will not deny; that you desire to improve and to be better equipped to carry on this mission of improvement, you admit by your very presence here to-day, and it is a most promising sign of the times in Canada that you are found to-day, not in storming the House of Commons, or in boisterously trying to break up some gathering of men, but in quiet conference, discussing your plans, seeking en-

thusiastic encouragement from one another, and being willing to listen to the advice even from mere men who know less about the needs of your life than you do yourselves. Our only excuse for being here is that we may encourage you, and perhaps say something that will suggest some line of thought that may be of assistance to you. Let me repeat, the greatest hope of Canada is in her women, and the highest mission that you have to-day is in the building up of model homes, where the youth of this country may receive that equipment for life which is the most important, outweighing all the teachings and trainings of school and college, of office and of factory. Let me impress upon you this, the school, the college and the office can never equip a boy or girl with the most important elements of life.

THE IDEAL OF LIFE.

This brings us to the question, What are the most important elements of life? The answer to that question depends upon another: What is life? What is the ideal of life? Some people seem to think that it is to amass wealth, and that the best man is he who gathers together the largest amount of wealth, and all that wealth stands for; Cræsus is their ideal. Others appear to think that the aim of life is to acquire power or influence; the autocrat of all the Russians would be their ideal. Others appear to think that fame or notoriety is the end to be arrived at. I need not enumerate the many other ideals. You see them exemplified on all sides, and you see what miserable failures are the result of this seeking after false or warped ideals. I need not take time to prove to you how vain and unsatisfactory are these ideals that so many are striving after, and how the march of progress is impeded by this striving after false ideals. What a grand nation this would become if only we could have true ideals set before our people, and if the whole nation were permeated with the desire and one determination to work along the best lines. "To do good and to be good," is an old sermon often preached, and yet as full of power and potency to-day as at any time in the world's history. In fact, I do not know that ever it was as important as to-day that we strive to drive out the false ideals and motives of men, and replace them by those basic and homely virtues that are essential to the permanent working out of the people's welfare. Need I tell you or try to prove to you that patience and perseverance, cheerfulness and enthusiasm, sincerity and generosity, are to-day more powerful in the moulding of the lives of humanity than learning and cleverness and shrewdness. I ask you who are among the older classes (if the ladies will allow me to refer to the fact that even they may advance in years and become retrospective), to look back over the history of those of your life-long acquaintance, and tell me whether the homely virtues that I have described have not contributed more to the happy and successful lives of your acquaintance than has the mere cleverness of the school and the college training. Take these

qualities out of the lives of the youth, and education will become a curse, rather than a blessing. How often have you seen the man of little scholastic training succeed because he has been cheerful in his work, generous to his associates, patient in his difficulties, sincere in his dealings with men, and persevering in the working out of his plans. John Ruskin says: "On the whole, it is patience which makes the final difference between those who succeed or fail in all things. All the greatest people have it in an infinite degree, and, among the less, the patient weak ones always conquer the impatient strong."

If you desire your son, your daughter, your brother, your sister, to succeed in this world, to get the best out of the world, and to make the most of himself or herself, the best equipment that you can wish for such is that he or she be gentle, cheerful, enthusiastic, patient, generous and sincere. Give anyone these, and learning falls into second place. You need not be anxious about the life-career of such a boy or girl; you know what future is in store for such a person. You have seen the brilliant student fail in life because of the lack of these qualities. You have seen the student of only ordinary attainments succeed and succeed admirably because of the possession of these most important qualities that are not always considered in the awarding of diplomas or the attainment of scholarship. These are essential in the individual, and they alone can make a nation great.

WHERE THESE QUALITIES MAY BE ATTAINED.

Now, where are they to be attained? Where are they to be cultivated in the boys and girls of this country? I answer, IN THE HOMES. And the wives, the mothers, the sisters, are the greatest agents in imparting or developing them in the youth of this country. My point, then, is, that in the home is the source of the most important elements of true manhood, and anything that can be done to encourage the growth of these virtues in the homes of the people is for the making of the nation. To the women of Canada is entrusted the greatest privilege and the greatest responsibility in the rearing of the citizens of this country. You should realize the importance of this privilege, and you should recognize and accept in its truest form this responsibility. Do not make any mistake on this point. You cannot transfer this responsibility to the school, to society, or to the church. You have in your hands the future of this country, and the place, the only place, in which you can best work out this duty is in your homes. I know that our papers are filled with accounts of nations warring against one another, or of clever moves to take advantage of one another, of prize-fights and Marathon races, of political scandals and of investigations, of the speculations and manipulations of men of wealth and of soulless corporations, of the deeds and ventures of men of momentary importance—all these represent the outcome of individual life; they are not the source of national life. The