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EVERYWOMAN'S WORLD

Canada's Great Home Magazine

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Entered as second-class matter, at the post office, Toronto, Ont. Entered as second-class matter, Sept. 23, 1915, at the post office, Buffalo, N.Y., under the Act of Congress of March 3, 1879.



Trade Mark Registered 1913, Department of Agriculture, at Ottawa, by Continental Publishing Co., Limited, Toronto, Ontario. Magazine and Book Publishers.

PUBLISHED THE 15TH OF THE MONTH PRECEDING MONTH OF ISSUE BY CONTINENTAL PUBLISHING CO., LIMITED, TORONTO, CANADA
Publishers also of RURAL CANADA and EVERYWOMAN'S STOREKEEPERS

RENEWAL SUBSCRIPTIONS—Watch for renewal subscription blank which will be placed in your magazine when your subscription expires. By using this blank promptly you will avoid missing any issues. Back copies cannot be supplied.

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(For advertising business only. Subscriptions not received.)

Philadelphia, Metropolitan Building
Chicago, People's Gas Building
London, England, 16 Regent St., S.W.
Montreal, Cartier Building

Address correspondence direct to Toronto

Vol. VIII., No. 4

EDITORIAL

OCTOBER, 1917

How Can We Lift the Shroud?

IN Toronto, early in August, a little group of earnest, enlightened men and women arranged a meeting to consider certain vital facts relative to social matters not generally discussed in open public and most infrequently touched on by the public press.

The newspapers were invited to have representatives present.

A number of prominent newspaper men attended.

Many of our readers probably wondered just what had inspired the editorials which followed—for instance these from "The Globe" on Wednesday and Thursday, August 7th and 8th, presumably written by the Rev. J. A. Macdonald, so well-known as one of Canada's leading orators, as editor of the Globe, and previously as editor of The Westminster and a noted Presbyterian divine.

She Might Have Been Your Daughter

SHE married in her early twenties. The dew of heaven was on her brow. The light of heaven was in her eyes. In her heart the love throbbed big and glad, that makes for all the world the Eden of innocence and beauty and truth. As she walked down the aisle of the church, going out on that strange new journey of life, so queenly was she, so winsome, so undefiled, had she been your daughter your heart would have swelled with holy pride, and hope for her in her new home would have been high and confident and strong.

But when the home door closed her good angels must have wept, for in the darkness an enshrouded pestilence walked, whose coming cast no shadow and whose footsteps made no sound upon the stairs.

Never again was she to know happiness, or purity, or health. Children came to the home, one, two three, each with its own entail of sorrow, and bearing, seen or unseen, the brand more inescapable, more inevitable, more mysteriously persistent than any brand of Cain. And through years of torture, in every joint of agony, and along every nerve of pain, she herself in her own body and soul paid the wages of his sin that was not her sin. The innocent suffered for the guilty. The harvest of horror and unspeakable anguish was reaped long years after, by hands that did not sow the accursed seed.

Yes! she might have been your daughter.

Her name is Legion. You will find her in every hospital in Canada, in every Home for Incurables; and her ill-fated children, whom even her divinest love could not save from the penalty of their father's unspoken heedless sin against the inexorable Law of Nature, they jabber in the wards of the feeble-minded, and are in that endless procession which, through all the centuries, have crowded the asylums for the insane.

Of course it is the Old Story. It is old as human sin. It is monotonous as the endless procession of human life. It is majestic and merciless as the organic law of human society. No man liveth to himself, or dies to himself alone. The law of transgression runs "unto the third or fourth generation of them that hate;" but the law of chastity and purity and obedience works

redemptively "unto thousands of them that love."

But it is Law. For weal or for woe it is Law. The soul that sinneth it shall die. That eternal law is no respecter of persons. And by the organic law of the social order we are all bound up together, for blessing and for cursing, in family circles, in community groups, in national commonwealths. And you can't afford—all you who pass by—you can't afford to be unconcerned when, in a world like this, the arrow that flieth by day may fetch a wide circuit round by your home, and when the pestilence that walketh in darkness may touch with tragedy the apple of your eye.

She might have been your daughter—that innocent victim of our enshrouded social sin. The sin is still here in a thousand forms and guises. The pestilence walks every night in the social world where he lives who may one day be the partner of your daughter's home. Is it nothing to you that he be warned and that she be saved?

Play with forked lightning if you will, but to him that plays fast and loose with this eternal law of human society all experience says "Thou Fool!"

Lift the Shroud

YESTERDAY in Toronto officers representing Medical Health and officers representing Military Service met a group of men and women representing the citizenship of Canada, and laid before them the scientific and the social facts relating to venereal diseases, their prevalence and their peril. In the name of science, in the interests of society, and, for the sake of Canadian national life, they demanded that all the agencies dedicated to the service of the Nation and of the Church work together to combat a social evil deadlier than smallpox, more destructive than war, and smiting without respect all grades of society, all ages, and both sexes.

Someone said the other day that, two generations ago, the Medical Superintendent of the Toronto Asylum for Insane spoke plainly, openly, sternly, of what he called "an enshrouded moral pestilence." In polite society the shroud is still on the face of "the pestilence that walketh in darkness." That pestilence still walks every night, as the military officers declared yesterday, under the electric lights of Yonge street and of Queen street. And every day, in the wards of every hospital, civilian and military, "the destruction that wasteth at noonday" traces the steps of those pestilent feet, and the diseases that follow in their train have branded not only the guilty but the innocent, and doomed unborn children to life that is worse than death.

Shrouded, indeed! It has been shrouded far too long. That shroud of ignorance and of reticence and of fear must be lifted. And if the necessities of the war, if the urgent call for recruits, if the demands for physical fitness and efficiency in war service make necessary drastic legislation and the ruthless application of such laws, then let that shroud be torn away. Let it be plainly stated that every city in Canada in times of peace has been honeycombed with diseases bred through lives of prostitution. Let it be known that in times of war, in the stern times of the past three years, every large military camp has been infested by men and women whose business it has been to make gain through systematic ministering to lusts of the flesh which, for civilian and for military, produce diseases and end in death. And let us not foolishly, vainly, criminally deny the fact, announced yesterday, that, out of one military district, fifteen hundred military men in one year have been in the base hospital under treatment for venereal diseases which, if uncured, would make it impossible that they should ever see military service in France, or ever be fit for social life in Canada. And that alarming situation, in spite of the best that alert military officers could do and that medical warnings could secure.

A stupendous problem is before us in Can-

ada. Its magnitude cannot be exaggerated. We shall be fools, and shall pay the penalty of fools, if we shut our eyes to what our medical experts and military leaders warn and advise. The people must know. The shroud must be lifted. And the laws must be made effective to fit the crime. Recruits must be saved from destruction in Canada. And Canadian life must be protected against the return of disease from the front. Not otherwise can this nation be saved.

TO anyone, not in on the real information, such writing is maddening.

As one young woman remarked, "Well, why don't they lift the shroud?"

And one journalist present answered that they don't know how to lift the shroud without giving offense to a lot of right-meaning people who prefer, ostrich-like, to hide from the truth—to have it suppressed even as "The Fiddlers" has been suppressed.

The question before every editor, on this so-called delicate subject, is "How can I lift the shroud so that knowledge of the facts may enter the home where children are—if perchance they should happen to read—and yet that any mother, any father, or any dear old Auntie, or perchance a bachelor uncle, may not take umbrage and feel that the journal is unsafe to leave in the house, lying about for anyone to read."

THERE, you have the reason!

Now, have you an idea on how we can lift the shroud? Will you send it to us—in confidence if you like?

SOMEONE, somewhere probably has the right idea. We are not sure that we have it—so come, let us hear from you!

"There is safety in a multitude of counsellors," and from what our readers send, we look forward to being led straight to our appointed duty.

Tell us what you think ought to be done.

Tell us how can we lift the shroud—how should we lift the shroud for the safeguarding of our readers in more than 125,000 homes, uniformly distributed everywhere throughout Canada where there are English-speaking people—lift it without giving offense, without doing harm and that good may result.