ARE WE DEGENERATING? IF SO, WHY?

(Continued.)

We are wont to boast about our progress, our liberty, and our freedom, but I fear that we forget that the most rapid and brilliant results are not always a sure criterion of the most enduring advancement; that liberty may not mean physical, intellectual and moral disenthralment, but license leading to the most abject slavery; and that freedom, instead of breathing forth a spirit that ennobles and uplifts mankind to a higher and better plane, may exhale a mephitic poison which degrades and besots all who come within the range of its baleful influence.

No better illustration of the abuse of this so-called freedom can be cited than the material appearing in our modern newspapers. Their columns are not only filled with falsehood and misrepresentation, but reek with sensationalism and vileness which make them unfit for decent homes. They bristle with advertisements of vile nostrums, which not only defraud and swindle the unwary and ignorant, but carry death and devastation in their trail. In one column appears a panegeric on the elevating influence of the press, and in another the notice of an abortifacient remedy which carries death in its wake and makes virtual murderers of the people who use it, and if justice and right were done would make the newspapers accomplices in the transaction. In another place can be seen the report of an eloquent sermon, accompanied in a nearby column by the heartrending appeal of some scoundrel and fakir to the real or imaginary victims—principally the latter—of youthful indiscretions or lost manhood. And still we are told that the newspapers are the great educators of the people!

If guiding youthful minds into sensationalism and vice, if acquainting them with and showing them how to commit crime, if giving assistance to the vilest frauds and swindles and helping them to plunder a credulous and ignorant public—if these and many other similar things for which the newspapers are directly responsible are high and noble, then truly they are performing their mission in a highly successful manner.

The spread of venereal diseases, tuberculosis and carcinoma, together with the widespread use of stimulants and narcotic poisons, has done much to taint the blood and lower the vital resistance of the people, so that it is doubtful whether much ot the progress made in sanitary science and the stamping out of contagious and infectious diseases has not been counterbalanced by a lowered general vitality.

It is true that, owing to these advances and the enormous increase in the number of hospitals and charitable institutions the death-rate among children and the dependent classes of all ages has been greatly reduced, and along with this reduction the general death-rate has been greatly lowered; but the fact, nevertheless, remains that an immense number of weaklings have been saved to transmit their defects to coming generations and still further lower the general health and vital resistance.