

work of the home, quiet and unnoticed, is the important element, and though the world may not notice upon the front page of the newspaper or chronicle your work in heavy headlines, it is your work, after all, that tells in the final summing up. I am not here to flatter you or to deceive you by false praise. I want simply to impress upon you that in your homes you can so direct the habits, the thinking and the motives of the young men and women, and of the older men and women, also, that the greatest mass of the people shall move along right lines, and gradually obliterate from the daily record of mankind those terrible and detestable things that to-day fill the columns of so many of the papers. Future Canada is to-day rocking in the cradle of your homes, toddling with uncertain steps at your skirts, sitting at your table, receiving impressions day by day in that most receptive period of existence. Shall patience, cheerfulness, enthusiasm, gentleness, generosity, sincerity, the love of the true, the beautiful and the good, be a part of the make-up of that youth, or are you going to let future Canada depend upon the teaching of the schools and the preaching of the churches? You cannot pass on your responsibility to the teacher, the preacher and the employer. These latter have an influence, a great influence, but their value and effect depend largely upon the primary teaching of the home; the school, the church, the store, the office, the shop, are secondary; the home is fundamental.

I know that there are many whose opinions we value who lay great stress upon the school, the college, and the training of active business life, as the true educators and developers of life. They tell us, cut your boy loose from the apron-strings of his mother and send him off to school, where he will have to rub up against other boys in the classes and upon the playground. Send him away to boarding school or college, where he will have the rough edges taken off, the eccentricities toned down, and his true manliness developed; push him right out into the business of life, and let him get the hard knocks and find out that life is developed by keen competition—that is what will make a man of him better than the quiet, humdrum life of his home. They will quote to you Wellington's remark that "Waterloo was really won on the football field of Eton." There is some truth in all these things, of course, but none of these can or should take the place of the home. The value of school, college and hard business life will depend largely upon the boy's possessing these qualities which originate in the home. If he has been started right at home, he will develop well under the new training of these other institutions; but if he has been so unfortunate as to have been neglected in his home, he may make a sad failure under the influence of those severe forces that are to be found awaiting the young man who leaves home for a training elsewhere. There is a danger, a terrible danger, for the boy who is sent away from home without a good home training, in the new competition of life, where the survival of the fittest is the rule. They tell us that only thus will there be brought out of the boy what good there is in him. Very well, but the good must be in him, or it will not be brought out; that element of goodness must first be found within the make-up of the boy. In these days there appears to be an increasing tendency for us to shift the responsibility from the home, and to think that when we pay for the tuition or schooling of our boys we include in that the imparting of those virtues which belong properly to the home. If only we could, from the first years of childhood, have our boys and girls trained in the essential elements of a true home, we could send them to any school or to any college, or out into any line of business apprenticeship,

without any anxiety whatever as to their development.

A GRAND EQUIPMENT FOR LIFE.

What a grand equipment for life's work, duties and responsibilities the youth has whose early home-life has sown the seeds of these virtues, simple and homely or homelike, you may call them, but they are sterling, indispensable and durable. I do not, of course, for one moment state that these qualities are not to be found in our best schools, colleges, offices and places of business, but what I do say is that they have their first, their best, their surest beginning in the home, and that the youth having them will make the most of his training in school, office, and other place of preparation for life-work; and the boy who has not had the advantage of their inception in the home, starts life sadly handicapped. If they are not woven into the fabric of his early home-life, he may be handicapped, or even cursed by the teaching of the schools, the office and the factory.

Look over the daily list of wrecked lives—young men of ability occupying positions of trust and responsibility—and seek the cause of failure—defaulters, embezzlers, suicides, wreckers of homes—and ask the question, Why? Where is the weakness? What is the motive? You can, in practically all cases, answer it by saying that the unfortunate, the guilty one is lacking not in ability, not in shrewdness, but in some of those more important qualities that I have stated belong primarily to the home life.

We need churches, we need schools and colleges, we need offices and shops and stores, and we need all these of the best, and we should strive to improve all these; but, most of all, we need homes—homes of the best kind, home life of the best form, homekeepers and home-makers of the truest and noblest type, and you are to be congratulated that your mission is to endeavor to help along such an important cause.

Some may say this is well known to all people of ordinary sense and reasoning. Of course, the world would be better if we were all courteous and gentle, patient and persevering, cheerful and enthusiastic, sincere and generous. This is the gospel of true manhood and good citizenship. It is not a new gospel. Tennyson has taught us:

"How'er it be, it seems to me
'Tis only noble to be good;
Kind hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood."
—Tennyson, Lady Clare Vere de Vere.)

And the same message can be found even among the old Roman poets:

Nobilitas sola est atque unica virtus.
—(Juvenal, Satire VIII.)

A PROBLEM IN THE RACE TO PERFECTION.

If the improvement of the race, then, is so easy, why has it not reached perfection long since? Just because it is not "so easy." It is easier to learn mathematics than to learn to be exact and honest in one's thinking and doings; it is easier to learn how to speak a living foreign language than to restrain one's own tongue under provocation; it is easier to read the classics and to cultivate the liberal arts than to cultivate courtesy and to act in gentleness through all the trying perplexities of life; it is easier to study the problems of biology than to direct our own lives along lines of sincerity and generosity. This is an old problem, as old as the origin of the first family life, and it is still a problem, because it is a difficult one, and it is only through the strenuous and continuous struggle against selfish inclinations up through and towards these simple yet difficult virtues that humanity improves and develops into the highest and the best.

WHAT THE WOMEN CAN DO.

My paper so far has been a sort of sermon by a layman trying to emphasize the well-known and the generally-accepted statement that habits are best acquired in youth at home, and that habits are of more consequence to a boy or girl than learning, or what is known as cleverness. What need of all this summarizing? Only this, it is important enough to bear repetition. We cannot have it too strongly recognized, and, in these days of rush and worry, of false ambitions and misleading examples, it is well to get back to old-fashioned ideas and ideals; to call a halt, and see whether or not we who preach to others may not, after all, be lacking in some of these old-fashioned virtues that are so much needed in the present day. It is important that the work of the Women's Institutes be guided by correct principles. If your meetings, your discussions, your endeavors, are not based on these old principles, I fear that your work will not accomplish what you desire.

Here is a practical question. If gentleness and courtesy, cheerfulness and enthusiasm, patience and perseverance, generosity and sincerity, are so essential to true home life, how are they to be introduced, how are they to be taught? The question suggests its own answer. There is only one answer, "Example is better than precept." Perhaps right here you may be disposed to say that this example should be shared by the father and the brother. Quite so, but remember that I am not now talking to the men, and if you will allow me, I will right here say that, great as is the influence of man in the home, the influence of woman is, on the whole, far superior. You have only to read the lives of great men, and to talk with men whom you know, to be convinced of what I am saying. You cannot, you should not, and I am sure you would not care to try to throw off upon the men any of this responsibility that belongs to you, for this responsibility should be one in which you take true and honest pride.

What will it mean in the farm homes of this country to have these homely virtues developed? In the first place, it will tend to lift a great load off the shoulders of the men. The man whose home is cheerful and permeated with those commendable virtues, will take up his daily task with increased pleasure, and will carry on his work with greater certainty of success. In the second place, the boys and girls will be so attracted to farm work and farm life that there will be a ready solution of that oft-repeated question, "How shall we keep the boys on the farm?"

A FEW PROBLEMS IN REGARD TO FARM HOMES.

What a host of questions such a subject as this suggests. Perhaps you thought I intended to talk to you upon the question of the farmhouse, but my subject is the Home, not the House. You can have a home in a very cheap house, and you can have a palatial house that cannot be dignified by the name of home. The house is only one of the elements in forming the home. Had we time, we might discuss the farmer's house, under such headings as these:

How can we improve the surroundings of the house?

How should a good farmhouse be laid out so as to be comfortable and convenient?

How should the house be furnished? What labor-saving devices can be introduced so as to lighten the work of the housewife?

How shall we prepare the food and set it forth in the best manner?

Shall we have an attractive living-room, where the family can best cultivate the social side of life?

Shall we have books in the home? If so, what books?

What papers and magazines should we subscribe for?

Should the farmer's wife and the

boys and girls have papers and magazines suited to them, or must they, also, be content with the daily or weekly paper?

How can the farmer and his boys be brought into best relationship with one another, and into a sympathetic partnership of work?

Shall we have separate houses for the farm help, or must the farmer's wife and daughters continue to look after the cares of their family, and also take in boarders in a house none too large for their own family alone?

You are discussing questions such as these in your local gatherings, and no doubt you are getting help in these questions, and thereby contributing to the big general question of the improvement of the home.

I did not set myself the task of asking these questions, or of answering them. I must content myself with trying to give you in some way my idea of the great importance of the home in the life of this country, and in trying to prove that there is something more important in this home than the mere house.

IMPORTANCE OF THE FARM HOME.

My next statement is that the farmer's home is the most important home in Canada to-day. The city man lives amid conditions so artificial and changing that home life is apt to lose much of its original charm. And the boys and girls of the city—how they are to be pitied! So many of them have never known the delights of rural home life. Again and again they have seen the big furniture van carry the belongings of the family from one part of the crowded city to another, and their impressions of life are so filled up with noisy street cars and dusty automobiles that childhood becomes a strange mixture.

It is December in the city, and the snow is blowing in blinding clouds along the streets and around the corners. Six o'clock strikes, and the electric light still burns in the office. Six-thirty strikes, and arouses John Brown from his desk. With a heavy sigh at the work still undone, he rises wearily from the chair in which he has been sitting for several hours, puts on his heavy coat and starts for home, tired, weary, perplexed. The cool air is so refreshing, it helps, blow the troubles out of his brain. He reaches home, such as it is—magnificent, stylish, ornate, luxurious. After dinner he sits down before the grate fire and reads and re-reads the bundle of evening papers that he has brought home, or that have been left at his door. He must read these, he has formed the habit, they have become part of his daily routine. He reads the speeches that were made yesterday in the House of Commons, and comments are read in his face by the smile or the frown that unconsciously crosses his face. He reads of the financial troubles in New York and Chicago; then he hastily turns to the commercial page, and hurriedly glances over column after column of stocks. He reads of murders and other equally horrifying events; perhaps he even ventures into the mysteries of that wonderfully fascinating section, the society column. At last he settles down to the editorial page, and in the middle of an article that stretches its ponderous length over a column and a half, his head begins to nod, and he is off to the land of dreams.

Away he goes beyond the city, away into the country; there, nestled on the hillside is a little house, a gentle slope of grass leads to the front door, here and there a little clump of waving flowers or a shrub give variety to the landscape; on one side a hedge of cedar or spruce, on the other side the winding road that sweeps past the steps towards the drying-shed. A broad veranda, with some old-fashioned rocking chairs, invite to comfort. Within, the furnishings are plain and simple, but an air of sweetness and light blows through every room of the