

EDITORIAL

CANADAIN HOME JOURNAL

NELLIE L. McCLUNG

JANUARY, 1920

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Title: Editorial–Canadian Home Journal

Date of first publication: 1920

Author: Nellie L. McClung (1873-1951)

Date first posted: Apr. 11, 2022

Date last updated: Apr. 11, 2022

Faded Page eBook #20220422

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January, Nineteen-Twenty



By Nellie L. McClung

BUILDING

We have told ourselves, and told the world, that women are more constructive than men—that it is their keen delight to mend, build and heal. We still say so, and confidently declare that women are going to be the greatest factor in rebuilding the world—and just because some woman may be wondering what branch of the building profession she may follow, we beg leave to submit a few suggestions.

The liquor traffic has been one of the destructive forces of life. It has weakened, blighted, saddened, many homes. It is not dead yet. It never will be dead until it is forgotten. So long as it is joked about, sung about, written about and talked about as if it were a humorous thing, it will not die. Drinking is not funny. It is nearly always a heart-breaking thing to someone, generally a woman or a child. For this reason women should not regard it as a subject for laughter. And a good piece of building right now for women to undertake is to create public opinion against drinking songs, stories and jokes. Let us write John Barleycorn's epitaph, big and black and plain—

“Lie heavy on him, Earth, for he
Laid many a heavy load on thee.”

THE OLD-FASHIONED LOVE OF WORK.

The war broke down some principles which it behooves us to rebuild as speedily as possible.

There is an underlying principle on which society rests (if at the present moment we may be permitted to speak of society “resting”), and that is that each able-bodied, full-grown individual must work at something. When people have the desire to work and are able to find pleasure in that work, the country is happy and prosperous, and, conversely, we can truthfully say that whatever destroys the desire to work in the individual, endangers the safety and well-being of society. The desire for work and the possibility of finding pleasure in it is often destroyed by starvation wages, poor conditions, or any other injustice which embitters the heart of the worker.

But there is another destroying element equally dangerous, and that is the poisonous belief that work is not necessary. The real estate madness which fell upon us a few years ago spoiled many an honest workman and destroyed his taste for pleasurable toil.

Then came the war, and its activity, its imperative demands for service, saved the country from the deadly reaction of the gambling bout into which the country had fallen. At least, it postponed the trouble.

Now the trouble has arrived, good and plenty. It has to be met and overcome; and women must restore to the world the sanity it has lost—and the first step is to develop the old-fashioned love of work.

But how can we teach our children the love and necessity of work when they see wheels of fortune and other gambling devices operated openly and without shame in the name of patriotism? Do you think any little lad of ten who works early and late, delivering papers for \$5.00 a week, is not upset and troubled and discontented when he finds that another youngster risked his one dollar and drew out a fifty-dollar Victory bond!

In the name of patriotism, grave crimes have been committed, and much harm has been done in lotteries, raffles and other gambling methods of raising money. And now it becomes the duty of women to make a protest against these things. While the war was on people were so burdened and anxious to raise money that they let down the bars, mistakenly, I think, but with the best of motives. But there is no excuse for it now, and here is a place for women to get busy and do some mending!

SET A GUARD ON YOUR TONGUE

Another fine piece of building that we can all do is to try to turn the tide of revolutionary talk into saner channels. It is customary, I know, to abuse the Government, and, generally speaking, a safe and inexpensive form of

entertainment and part of our British birthright; but we must have a care that our words have not in them the elements of anarchy and lawlessness.

Words are things. The Germans knew this when they sent out their agents to poison the minds of workmen everywhere. They simply talked—talked discontent, injustice, rebellion; and the poison took effect.

“Yes, indeed, words are things,” one of the characters in “Lucille” is made to say. “And the man who concedes to language the privilege to outrage his soul is controlled by the words he disdains to control.”

Now there is a tendency and a very real reason for discontent. People are nervous, tired, depressed and troubled. The problem of living decently under existing conditions is a heavy one, but the mental attitude toward life is, as always, the deciding factor. If we can keep sane and cheerful and optimistic, we will be able to bring about a better order. But if we go on talking class hatred, setting the rich against the poor, we will feed the flames of anarchy which will destroy us. In Russia, where despotism, misrule and ignorance have cursed the people for generations, we cannot wonder that a madness has fallen on them at last. There is a limit to the endurance of the human heart. But in our country, where we have free schools, free institutions, free speech (generally) and always a fair chance of success for the industrious and moral, we have little cause for bitterness of speech.

I do not mean that we should blindly submit to the rulings of Government and offer no protest against conditions which we believe to be unjust. Far from it. But an intelligent protest can be made along constitutional lines. Reformation does not need to be revolution. We women have in our hands that weapon which will gain for us our desires, if we use it intelligently and unitedly. In a country where everyone has the ballot there is no excuse for revolutionary measures or incendiary talk. Let us formulate our plans, put in words what we want done, and then if enough people want it, and want it badly enough to work with everyone else who wants it, it shall come to pass!

GLOOMERS!

We have all a certain amount of nerve energy—and most of us, adult men and women, need all we have! We try in various ways to increase it, by sane living, proper exercise and recreation—but sometimes I think we do not protect ourselves enough from the forces which have a tendency to deplete our stock.

They are many and varied in number. Let us consider one of them, viz., Gloomers!

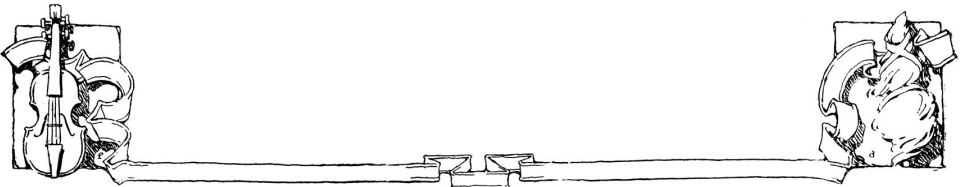
They are the people who sap our energy by making heavy claims upon our sympathy. I have just finished talking to one of them—I mean she has been talking to me—and I am mentally prostrated and physically as limp as a salty cucumber.

The lady in question has had a long and varied career, the incidents of which she recalls with painstaking and painful accuracy. Sad and long have been her days upon earth, and apparently she has not forgotten one disagreeable incident. She hasn't given herself a chance to forget; and to-day she had freshened her memory on a large number of them—and I was the victim. Her eldest daughter's eldest child was drowned in a well; her young boy ran away from home and has not been heard from for a year. Her second daughter married a man who beats her. (I reserve judgment in this case—maybe she deserves it—I believe there is something in heredity). Having exhausted the fatalities in her own family, she passed gaily on to the next zone and began some of her most blood-curdling paragraphs with "I knew a woman once."

The stories she told me were of people who are either dead or gone beyond recall. There was nothing to be done—nothing that could be done—but feel badly and sympathize.

I refuse to do any more of it. It is a sinful, foolish waste of the nerve energy that I need for my daily work. I will listen any time to the present wrong which can be righted, or the present sorrow which can be comforted. I am not heartless or unresponsive, but no old sorrow need come out of its grave and expect to fuss me up and make my nose red and my throat all lumpy!

To me, every tale of woe hereafter has to be dated!



[The end of *Editorial—Canadian Home Journal* by Nellie L. McClung]