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A LARMS heralding the decadence of national virility have been sounded frequently of late, and have attracted more or less attention.

One of the latest is that trumpeted by the British Medical Journal, a paper which comes nearer expressing the highest professional views of Europe than any other.

"There is one other matter," states this paper in a recent issue, "upon which we all look as such a very serious one."

"The problems of physical deterioration and the regeneration of the race are now discussed everywhere—in the drawing room as on the platform."

"We all profess to be anxious about posterity, but the truth is, we have somewhat suddenly awakened to the fact that physical degeneracy means danger to the nation in the present as well as in the future."

"It may, perhaps, be doubtful if physical deterioration, at least in any way that can be tested by measurement, is yet widespread, but there can be no doubt that it is an evil which becomes more and more threatening."

Waning in Power

Here the paper refers to the vast and growing luxuries which the wealth of today provides, and continues, regarding the conditions in England alone.

"The history of recent wars has shown that in the qualities of brute courage and staying power we are appreciably inferior to the men who fought under Nelson and Wellington. This is the inevitable result of the more luxurious habits and finer sensibilities which the advance of civilization brings in its train."

"To many observers our people seem to present many of the social features which marked the beginning of the decay of Rome. Now, as then, luxury and effeminacy have taken the place of the robust, if coarse, virility of an older time."

"The ravaging passion for advertisement—by crime, if it can be had in no other way; the love of public ways which public manners breed; the court paid by society to mimics and mummies; the

NERO fiddled while Rome burned. Are civilized people today dropping into decadence as they thoughtlessly follow the ignis fatuus of fashion and luxurious living?

Is vast wealth, or rather the vast misuse of it, undermining racial stability and national progress? Are the artificial castes being created bound to result in disaster? Can a nation be true to its highest ideals when dollar-chasing shoulders even patriotism aside; when dollar-spending engages attention to the exclusion of civic pride and virtue?

Many thoughtful observers of the trend of events answer the first three of these questions in the affirmative. "Luxury is killing

fierce rage for gambling and the sacrifice of every duty to pleasure; the vulgar display of wealth and the cynical indifference to anything that cannot be estimated in terms of money, which are among the marks of modern society, recall to some pessimists the time when Nero—the real originator of the doctrine of art for art's sake—burnt Rome to make a 'grand spectacular display' representing the downfall of Troy town."

"The vitality of the nation, which is something altogether different from the vitality of the individuals composing it, is being sapped by these causes and by others that need not be named."

Continuing its analysis, the medical paper asks: "Is this an inevitable fate that overtakes all nations as the end of their natural term of life? Or is it an evil against which we may strive with hope of success?"

"It is demonstrable," says Dr. T. H. Hyslop, "that our acquisitions and attainments, derived as they are from the artifices of civilization, are not only impediments to true mental evolution, but tend to submerge and render less vital the human mental faculties."

"Civilization brings with it evils which gender

the virility of mankind" is a warning that does not come from Socialists alone, but from eminent medical and philosophical students of present conditions.

It is not so much, for instance, that Americans spend nearly \$50,000,000 a year in the purchase of automobiles; that a family in Newport society cannot get along on less than \$1000 a day, or that \$15,000 may be spent upon a single ball. The last-mentioned sum is said to have been the cost of a Newport hop, while fashionable functions there frequently demand the expenditure of \$10,000 or \$12,000.

In season New York alone spends in the neighborhood of \$1,000,000 a night for

decay inevitable. Like other nations which have lived and died, we have known freedom and glory. Wealth, vice, corruption and barbarism are but the sequels.

"The strength and greatness of a nation do not lie in the sinews of its people, nor in the moneybags of its traders, nor in the glibness of its orators, but in the devotion of its citizens to a lofty ideal of public and private duty; in their love for all that is true and good and beautiful, and in their hatred for all that is false, evil, mean and ugly; in their strenuous pursuit of knowledge and their readiness to apply it to the making of life larger, fuller and happier for all."

Problems of Wealth

It must be borne in mind that the acquisition and the spending of wealth are two entirely different propositions, so far as they bear upon national life and character.

Virility, business acumen, that enterprise which turns the forests and the virgin fields into gold-producing centres, are necessary and manifest in wealth acquisition.

Such characteristics usually attend the first

after-theatre suppers; wealthy men have been known to furnish their palatial homes at a cost of \$1,000,000—one of them paid \$300,000 for three tapestries to hang upon his walls. America imports something like \$25,000,000 worth of diamonds and other precious stones annually.

Not long ago one New York dealer found little difficulty in securing a purchaser for a single ruby at \$100,000.

The question that arises is, "Do modern extravagance and luxury tend to the deterioration of the individual?" For, when the individual deteriorates, society in general strikes the sliding scale that has its end in decadence.

or second generations of a money-making family. It is the prodigality, the shiftlessness and the utter subservience of everything to the pleasures to be purchased by money, too often marking later generations, that rings the note of alarm.

A resident of Newport remarked not long ago that "it devoted itself to pleasure, regardless of expense." A hearer corrected him. "What these people really do," he said, "is to devote themselves to expense regardless of pleasure."

In that remonstrance, probably, lies the keynote of the warning which urges that modern civilization and practices are tending to lower mankind into decadence.

The expenditure of money alone does not threaten the safety of a people. The real danger lies in the increasing demand for such luxury as money can bring, regardless of every other demand or condition.

It is, perhaps, a fact that refutes dispute, that home life is gradually giving way to hotel and apartment existence in America.

During the last few years thousands of apartment houses and family hotels have sprung up in the cities. Of course, the servant problem has had much to do with the success of this fancy, or

fad, but even more, perhaps, it may be attributed to the growing dislike of American women to manage the details of their own homes.

Philosophers assert that when a woman dodges the responsibility of home life she is materially aiding her nation on its toboggan slide toward decadence.

In New York, one "bachelor maid" pays \$15,000 a year for her apartments. Not far away a man and his wife pay a similar rental for nine rooms, and a few months ago they expended \$60,000 to have the place redecorated to their liking. These are but a few of the many examples of great expenditure for what comes far from being the old-fashioned home.

Some years ago a writer recalled the old idea of patriots defending their hearthstones from foreign invasion. "At present," he continued, "we could present the spectacle of a nation called to defend a hole in the floor," meaning that the modern heat register has superseded the old open fireplace.

Today he would probably depict the nation gathering about the iron radiators of a hot water plant that warms an apartment house.

Romance is Lacking

To a certain extent poetic inspirations always animate the human heart, but can one imagine a people gathering with the same eagerness to defend a steam radiator in an apartment as they would "the hearthstones of their sires"?

"Easy come, easy go," is a maxim the present generation has applied to money. Extravagance seems the keynote of the age.

John Alden, progenitor of a sturdy and patriotic race, took his bride, Priscilla, to a modest cabin upon the floors of which the only carpet was white sand, traced in pleasing designs.

Not long ago a fashionable couple in the North—the man, with an income of \$50,000 a year, and the wife with an income amounting to \$300,000—declared in court that they could not live and support their establishment upon a combined revenue of nearly \$1000 a day.

(CONTINUED ON INSIDE PAGE)