

DAILY PEOPLE

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ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

SELF-PARALLELED.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE Christmas number of the *Ladies' Home Journal* furnishes highwater mark of the self-strangling poise of the spokesman for the rule of King Capital, or God Capital.

On one page, occupying one-half of the long and wide pages of the magazine, a flaming advertisement is spread of what is to be "the greatest series in the *Journal's* history." The series is to be made up of the accounts given by one hundred people, "sometimes with nine children," of how "they saved for and now own their own homes" upon an "average income of \$15 a week," "no earning being higher than \$30 a week, and none below \$4." The advertisement is illumined at its four corners with four cuts of two and three-story spacious suburban homes.

Whosoever has any knowledge of things knows that the claims set forth in this advertisement are so fractionally, if at all, true, as to amount to a substantial falsehood. Taking up only the bare fact of ownership, everyone knows that an average income of \$15 a week for a family could only raise a home the ownership of which is only a mockery to the saver. His is only a technical ownership. The real owner is the mortgagee. With a mortgage fastened to his neck like a veritable millstone, such a saver's life of "saving" up to the "home-owning stage" is thereafter followed by a life of carking cares that consume him. But there is a worse to all this. We need not describe it. Let the *Journal* parallel itself.

On another page is an article headed: "Why we do not 'have' certain Features." The article explains that in the September issue the paper asked its readers for suggestions for new features for 1903. It then goes on to report and comment on the "suggestions":

"More than 150 letters" asked for a "Children's Page" whereas "The Good Time" (a Children's Page) had been in the magazine for five months!

“More than 100 letters” asked for “reviews of books,” and yet Mr. Mabie’s “Literary Talks” had already appeared in the magazine for six months!

“Another 100 letters” asked for an “etiquette department,” this when “The Lady from Philadelphia” had been in the magazine for a year!—And all these features in the identical issue in which the question was asked!

And the article closes with this further light on the readers and the corresponding editorial sigh:

We explain all this because so many of our readers wonder why they do not receive prizes. Is it any wonder when in one Question Box there came nearly 3,000 letters, each one of which asked for some department that had already been in *The Journal* from six to twelve months, or suggested something that we had explained at least six times? Is there not some careless reading somewhere?

This closing passage illuminates the claim made in the advertisement of its being the most “helpful series” ever attempted; the claim, in turn, illuminates the editorial sigh: it tells what sort of thing such advertisements are “helpful” to.

Thrift is a virtue. No income can stand thriftlessness. But the deep damnation of the policy that prompts such advertisements, as the *Ladies’ Home Journal* perpetrates, is that they make of thrift a caricature, and throw it into disrepute. Saving is wise. But the operation needed to own any home, let alone such homes as the magazine pictures, upon an average family income of \$15 a week, is not saving. It is pinching. It is a starving of the body and the mind. It is the breeding of a shoddyism that has no opportunity to acquire benefits of etiquette, and is driven to suck it out of a magazine. It is the harrowing, crowding, dwarfing of the intellect: every penny needed for mental expansion being tied fast to the future (mortgagee’s) home. In short, it is the process that reveals mental conditions that justly prompt *The Journal’s* editor’s sigh.

The “homes” that the average worker in the country is able to save for are but enlarged “closets for skeletons.”