

also at midday, but it was twenty-three days after. It was not until thirty-nine days had passed that I first saw her as Evening Star after sunset. To see her in a midday sky when only fourteen days from conjunction, and to fail to see her in a twilight sky until nearly six weeks after conjunction, may seem strange. There is nothing strange about it, however, when all the circumstances of both cases are taken into account. I don't purpose to bother my readers with an account of them all, but here is one which can be tested as to its truth or untruth by any star-gazer who cares to take a little trouble. When Venus is near the Sun's place in the sky—say within  $10^\circ$  of inferior conjunction, or  $5^\circ$  of superior conjunction—it is often easier to see her at midday than in the morning or evening.

It is safe betting that no naked eye has seen Venus within two or even three weeks of her recent superior conjunction. When I saw her at midday two weeks before the previous conjunction she was only  $20^\circ$  from the zenith, and when I saw her again at midday, three weeks after that conjunction, she was  $27^\circ$  from the zenith. Two weeks before the recent conjunction the zenith distance of Venus at midday was  $63^\circ$ ; three weeks after this conjunction it was  $48^\circ$ . Very little experience is needed in observation to understand that what is visible at  $27^\circ$  from the zenith may not be visible at  $48^\circ$ , and that what is easy at  $20^\circ$  may be impossible at  $63^\circ$ .

But I take it that most readers are more interested in evening than in midday observations of Venus, and that they would like to know when they might hope to have their first sight of her after sunset. In a clear western sky it may be possible to see her with the naked eye on March 8th. During the next month she will become fairly easy, and quite easy after that. For the early dates she should be looked for a little south of west, and about a quarter of an hour after the sun disappears. By the end of the month no directions will be needed. She will then be on view for nearly an hour after sunset.

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And then she will have a companion. During the last week of March and the first two weeks of April observers will have the best opportunity of the year for seeing Mercury. He passes the sun on the 16th, overtakes Venus on the 26th, gains on her until April 8th, drops behind and is overtaken by her on the 18th, and swings back into line with the sun on May 1st. He may be picked up in a clear sky two or three days before his conjunction with Venus, and will be visible after that on every clear evening until about April 20th.

A. CAMERON.

Yarmouth, N. S., March 1, 1898.

P. S.—I saw Venus this afternoon (Saturday, 5th,) half an hour before sunset, with a field glass. A. C.

P. S.—Saw her for ten minutes to-day (Sunday, 6th,) in a yellow sky, with a mite of an opera glass, which I can put in my vest pocket. A. C.

[For the REVIEW.]

### A Lesson in English Literature.

#### MILTON'S SONNET ON HIS OWN BLINDNESS.

Much has been written to guide the student and teacher of literature, so much that one is easily bewildered by conflicting counsels. Prof. Dowden's essay on "The Teaching of Literature, in his *New Studies in Literature*"; Prof. Corson's "Aims of Literary Study," and J. W. Hales' introduction to his "Longer English Poems," may be recommended as the words of men who are at once scholars and experienced teachers.

Mr. Hales gives an elaborate analysis of one of Scott's ballads, apparently exhaustive in the different ways of presenting it, and showing what a wide field for study opens out from one single poem.

This illustration of his plan of teaching will repay careful consideration and pains in selecting from the many lines of study which he points out, those best suited to the class to be taught.

As an example of the teaching of a shorter poem, we will take up Milton's sonnet on "His Own Blindness."

"When I consider how my light is spent  
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,  
And that one talent, which is death to hide,  
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent  
To serve therewith my Maker, and present  
My true account, lest He returning chide,—  
Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?  
I fondly ask:—But Patience, to prevent  
That murmur, soon replies: God doth not need  
Either man's work, or his own gifts: who best  
Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best; His state  
Is kingly; thousands at His bidding speed  
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;—  
They also serve who only stand and wait."

It is a good plan to dictate the poem to younger pupils, or have them copy it from the blackboard. During the course of the year they may thus compile books of their own, which they will value highly. Preface the dictation or copying with the story of Milton's life, briefly and simply told, dwelling on the facts of his strong feeling of responsibility in regard to his work, his diligent preparation for it, his earnest desire that he might be able to leave something to after ages that they would not willingly let die, the troubled times in which he lived, and his great affliction. Note the date of the sonnet, the exact meaning of the words "spent," "talent," "bent," "fondly," "prevent," "post." What does "Ere half my days" mean? What is the reference in the third and three following lines? Let the children tell the parable of the talents, or read it, if they do not remember it. Who are the thousands? Why does he call the world "dark and wide?"