



Life, Literature and Education.

Another Arts and Letters Club has been organized in Toronto for the purpose of promoting the arts in Canada. What are the rural districts going to do by way of aiding such a movement, or are the rural districts going to stand still in all that makes especially for refinement, devoting themselves solely to the mere making of money?

The beneficence of Government operation of railways through capable, non-political management by commission, seems to have been again illustrated in Victoria, Australia. The railways of Victoria are owned by the State, and, until five years ago, were managed as a branch of Government. The results were, apparently, not unlike those on Canada's Federal railway, the Intercolonial. Deficits were constant. It was finally decided to hand over the management to a commission. A practical Canadian railroad man, Mr. Thomas Tait, who had received his training with the C. P. R., was appointed Chief Commissioner. Business methods have been applied, deficits disappeared, and the railroad is not only serving the people efficiently and economically, but paying its way. The deduction drawn from this experience is the absolute necessity for business management of public-owned ventures, and freedom from the pernicious and disastrous influences of patronage and political influence. On any other than a business basis, the leaks from a system of publicly-operated utilities may be expected to outweigh the benefits; on the other hand, when run with an eye single to the public good, the benefits are great. There are no shareholders in the Victorian railroads. The capital expenditures are represented by bond issues, at fixed rates. There can be no temptation, therefore, to increase private profits at the expense of the public service. The bond-holders reap an assured return of 3.82 per cent. The profits are applied to the improvement of ways and rolling stock, to the betterment of the passenger and freight service, and finally to the remission of rates and charges of the more important sort. In short, the railroads are administered in the interests of the people, rather than the capitalist. The report of the Victorian railway recalls an interview which the writer had a year or so ago with a New Zealander, who explained the working of Government-owned railways in that State, where increased earnings had been repeatedly applied to the reduction of rates and improvement of service. From his point of view, monopolistic ownership of the highways of commerce was unthinkable. So it may be some day in Canada, when people have learned to devote themselves as faithfully to public as to private service. Meanwhile, as a step in the right direction, the suggestion that the Intercolonial Railway be placed under an independent, capable, non-political commission, gains steadily in public favor.

The opening of the Montreal Technical Institute is another link in the chain which shows the strength with which the idea of technical education has taken hold of our country. The idea underlying the movement is a good one; people should be taught the things by which they must earn their living. At the same time, in the methods adopted for its promotion, there is the danger, as in most new ideas, of overleaping the mark, as seems to have been done already in many of our public schools, if one may judge by the amount of time spent on construction work, apparently with the sole result of making an attractive show. It is not very important that a child shall make a fine pasteboard box or whisk-bolder, tediously adorned with an indifferent design in water-color; it is, however, important that, in making these, he has learned something of deftness of finger, accuracy of measurement, and of the art of expression in conversation and composition; and these cannot be taught if too much time is feverishly spent in making a collection of articles for admiring relations to pronounce upon.

Again, the grand old subjects, reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, with an understanding of current events in various parts of the world, are too important to be pushed into the background. Nor can a word for the more purely pleasure-giving literature be left out. A love for good literature is one of the best gifts that can be given to any child, a gift which shall brighten many an otherwise gloomy hour through life, and prove a real solace in old age. But one life is to be lived, and anything that can add to its happiness is worth while.

Let us have technical training, but let that training be really educative, not a mere farce, misleadingly disguised under the name "technical." Above all things, let a judicious balance—not only of the subjects on the curriculum of our schools, but of the time allotted to those subjects—be maintained.

No better object-lesson could be given in regard to the importance of the disaster which bacteria of certain kinds may work if left to themselves, than the precautions taken of late at the boundaries of Canada to keep out foot-and-mouth disease. Automobiles, etc., crossing at Niagara have been detained and thoroughly disinfected before being permitted to go on their way. The pantry of a private car belonging to a party of rich Americans, en route to Cobalt, has been divested of everything in the way of dressed meat which it contained—ducks, turkeys, game, a side of beef—all being consigned to the fireplace of a Grand Trunk engine, while the trucks on which the viands were carried, the men who handled them, and even the platform across which the trucks were rolled, were thoroughly disinfected. It is only within the last few decades that the tremendous power of bacteria—all the more tremendous because exercised silently and invisibly—has been fully recognized, even by those in closest touch with the advances of science. Even yet, an adequate understanding of that pow-

er has failed to penetrate a great majority of the homes of the land. Until it does so, there is little hope for a general stamping out of disease, either of men or animals, or even of economic loss through the spoiling of provisions.

Among the death notices in a recent newspaper appeared a suggestive line, "Please do not bring flowers." The bereaved parents—people high in the social scale, by the way—perhaps knew little of the effect such an example may have. It is a beautiful custom for the nearest relatives of the deceased to put a few flowers on the coffin, but no one who knows the pleasure which these "silent messengers" can give to a sick person, can fail to regret that they are so often held back until the time for pleasing is past. A little bouquet of sweet peas or violets, a single rose, sent to an invalid is a missionary, sweet and unobtrusive; the expensive pillow or wreath laid on the coffin seldom fails to carry with it, along with what may be sincere sympathy, a savour of ostentation. The pity of it—that vulgar parade cannot be kept from invading even the death-chamber! . . . Send flowers for the coffin if you will, but let your best gifts go to the invalid.

Some of the American newspapers and magazines find a subject for "copy" in President Roosevelt's "oceans of words" and the "miles of manuscript" in which he conveys his suggestions to Congress. The retiring President may be prolix, but since the body of his addresses is usually made up of reiterations of the principles which he has laid down since the beginning of his presidency, it is evident that he believes, with Pestalozzi, that "repetition is the secret of all true education." In his last annual message to Congress, he again sets forth his convictions: Railroads should be placed completely under the control of an Interstate Commerce Commission. Rebates and special privileges should not be given. Combinations should not be entirely done away with, but such as are in the interests of the public should be permitted, subject to the control and supervision of some agency of the National Government, publicity being given to all affairs connected therewith which affect the public. All the agencies of interstate commerce should be under control of the National Government. A condition should be brought about by which those who produce shall own a greater share than at present of the wealth they create. There should be diminution of woman and child labor in factories, and a general shortening of working hours. Stock-watering should be prohibited, stock-gambling discouraged, and a progressive inheritance tax levied on large fortunes. Finally, he appeals for a stronger effort toward systematic preservation of the forests; for an increased appropriation for the Bureau of Education; an appropriation for building four battleships; and the establishment of a parcel post on rural routes. . . . In striking contrast to the humane spirit underlying the above, comes an account of

the subjects engrossing the attention of the current Duma. A violent discussion has there taken place over a Government bill to grant a credit of \$500,000 for the benefit of the employees of the prisons' administration who were victims of outrages while on duty, or of their families, when the employees were killed. Socialists and Laborites denounced the administration and the torturing methods applied to political prisoners, Deputy Rosanoff asserting that, as a result of prison conditions, 60 per cent. of these prisoners are dying of tuberculosis. . . . In the British House of Lords, Lord Morley, Secretary of State for India, speaking recently on the situation centering in Bengal, expressed little fear for the future. He is strongly of the opinion that the Indians must be admitted to a much larger share in the Government, but expressed the opinion that much wisdom and moral strength are necessary in guiding and controlling the people of that turbulent land.

People, Books and Doings.

A meeting of the British Society for the advancement of Science will be held in Winnipeg next summer.

Wireless telephony has been coming within sight of perfection in Europe. During the past autumn, a man in Paris spoke into a receiver connected with wires running up the Eiffel Tower, and his words were distinctly heard by another, on Cap Raz de Sein, near Brest, considerably over one hundred miles away. Camille Tissot, physical-science teacher, of Brest, is the inventor of the apparatus used. He has long devoted himself to wireless experiments, and simultaneously with Marconi, although knowing nothing of what the latter was doing, invented a wireless telegraph which worked perfectly over sixty miles. At present, the Metropolitan Life Tower, of New York, is being fitted with a wireless-telephony apparatus, and attempts will be made to communicate with the Eiffel Tower.

The title of the world's biggest land-owner may be claimed by Mr. Sidney Kidman, the Australian cattle king. He owns more of the British Empire than any one other man. At 14 he was earning 10s. a week, and now he has 49,210 square miles of land standing in his name. He began life as a teamster, and gradually worked his way up until he was the largest horse-dealer and cattle-owner in Australia. He owns 100,000 cattle and 10,000 horses, yet he is not quite satisfied with his business methods. According to the Argonaut, he is going to Canada to try and get a job on a ranch as a cowboy, so that he can find out the inside of the American methods.—[Otago (N. Z.) Witness.

Major Edgar A. Mearns, surgeon in the United States Army, author, and authority on zoology and botany; Mr. Edmund Heller, zoologist, formerly with the Field Columbian Museum in Chicago; and Mr. J. Alden Loring, of Oswego, N. Y., an authority on the smaller mammals, and an expert collector, will accompany President Roosevelt on his hunting trip in Central Africa.