

NOTES AND COMMENTS

A plea for better guidance of boys and girls in the choice of fiction is made by Herbert Bates in the current number of *The English Journal*. It relates directly to the reading done by high school pupils, but what Mr. Bates says applies to all direction of the young in this respect, and the advice given is of value to parents as well as teachers.

The ordinary boy loves stories of action, and his taste for Diamond Dick and Nick Carter may be improved, Mr. Bates says, by giving him tales full of stirring life by such authors as Doyle, Dumas, Kipling, Morgan, Robertson, Marryat, Clark Russell, Lover, Lever, Bullen, Connolly, Stevenson, Beach, Jules Verne, Sienkiewicz and Jack London and "all who tell their stories well, no matter if there are dozens of teachers of English who have never heard of them." The girl's taste for Laura Jean Libbey and similar purveyors of what would direct to novels of the highest type through similar guidance.

It is commonplace for teachers to prescribe "the best books," of course, but Mr. Bates insists that they should do more than this, and he is of the opinion that "it is of no use to forbid a book." Sympathetic direction of reading, he holds, requires reading of the books in question, comment on them so as to point out merits and demerits, and guidance upward and onward through knowledge thus acquired. That is not a light task, but its fulfillment should bring satisfaction to the conscientious teacher or parent.

On his sixty-fifth birthday Thomas A. Edison, the great inventor, feels as active as he was twenty years ago. He predicts that "it's a matter of a short time when we will be sure we can live to 150 years." Many of us would like to know how short the time may be until that lengthening of the human span, but until the prediction is fulfilled it will be life-lengthening to live in the assurance of the truth of the adage that "a man's old as he feels."

Edison wisely places heredity first in importance in considering the life of an individual. But it has been demonstrated often that by right living one with a short expectation of life, from the average duration point of view, can attain a ripe old age and do good work up to his death. Edison eats little and sleeps little; he believes that "eating is too much of a function." He opposes especially the "cocktail habit."

There are no rules to be derived from one person's experience, considered alone. Edison's rules of life apparently are good for him; whether they would be good for everybody is uncertain. But it can be said in general that cocktails are inferior to solid food for every one, and that many of us eat too much. As to sleep there seems to be widely varying needs, and few are able to get along with only four to five hours a day after the Edison fashion.

Shiloh's Cure

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WEAPON FOR AVIATORS.

Pencil-Shaped Piece of Steel With Grooves in Shaft.

As the result of a long study on the part of the French War Department a deadly weapon has been invented for the use of aviators in war. It is a piece of steel about 5 inches long, much like a slate pencil in shape. The head, which extends 2 inches up the shaft from the point, is of solid steel, and very heavy. From the head upwards the surface is no longer smooth and round like a pencil, but there are four grooves cut into the steel, thus making the shaft cross-shaped.

The aviator, when flying above the enemy, has only to let these weapons drop in handfuls and he will do deadly execution. The projectile invariably falls point first, because of the heavy steel head, while the cross-shaped shaft acts as a rudder.

The speed which these pieces of steel would gather in falling from an aeroplane would be terrific. By experiment it has been shown that the missile, dropped from a height of only 3 feet on to a plank of hard pine, will penetrate an eighth of an inch.

BOVRIL

BUILDS SOUND MUSCLE

C-2-15

Young Folks

BORROWED SUNSHINE.

Rap! tap! tap! went Constance's little silver thimble against the window-pane.

"What are you tapping at?" called mother, from the next room. "Surely no one could hear you away up here," for Constance was one of a great many little girls whose homes are in the large apartment-houses in the cities.

"Look, mother, the little girl must be sick," said Constance, pointing to a window opposite.

Mother peeped over her shoulder, and saw a pale little face propped up by many pillows.

"See, mother, she has no one to talk to, and nothing to play with, and she has been there at the window every day this week. How tiresome that must be!"

"That side of the house is so dark, too," said mother.

"How I wish I could send her something to play with," sighed Constance.

"There, mother, she's waving. Wave quickly!" cried Constance.

"Her window faces north," said mother, "and that means that the sunshine never comes in. I should think that the very nicest thing that you could send her would be a few sunbeams."

"Now, mother, you're joking. I mean to send her something really nice. How could any one send sunbeams?"

"Oh," smiled mother, "that's easy. At least," she added, "it will be in about half an hour. You will have just time to finish that hem before the sun gets high enough."

Constance flew to get her little sewing-basket and the surprise handkerchief she was making on Saturday mornings, for father's birthday.

For a few moments the needle flew in and out, and when the hem was finished, in came mother with the small, round hand-mirror from her dressing-table.

She pulled the curtains aside, and then said to Constance, "Look!"

Constance looked, and there she saw a bright yellow and purple spot of real sunlight, which danced all about very gaily on the dull wall, as the mirror was tipped first one way and then the other.

"Now," said mother, "be sure to hold it carefully, so that it will not shine in her eyes," and she showed Constance just how to hold the mirror so that the patch of sunshine danced about on the comforter over the little girl's knees.

She seemed greatly puzzled by it at first, and when she looked up to the window where Constance was standing, and saw where the sunbeam came from, she clapped her hands and called to her nurse, who came in to see, also.

After that Constance spent many happy mornings, and until the little girl was well enough to come out to play, the sunbeams danced about her couch.—*Youth's Companion*.

UNCONSCIOUS ACCURACY.

"Now, can you tell me what the olfactory organ is?" asked a teacher of a pupil.

"Please, sir, no, sir," answered the boy.

"Quite right!" came the teacher.

"That fellow is too slick for me. Sold me a lot that was two feet under water. I went around to demand my money back." "Get it?" "Get nothing!" Then he sold me a gasoline launch and a copy of "Vernian Life," by W. D. Howells."

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HEALTH

PRECOCIOUS CHILDREN.

The belief is general that precocity in a child is ominous, that it is likely to mean future injury both to mind and body. Precocity, it is often said, is found only in the neurotic and in those of unbalanced mind or weak body. It is called abnormal, and declared a misfortune.

Whether the abnormal is always undesirable depends on the view you take of humanity in general. If the inhabitants of our world are the best possible beings, then anything exceptional must certainly be bad. But many would deny the premise. These people are not pessimists; they think human beings very good, but they believe there is still room for improvement in them. Improvement is effected in large measure by the geniuses and the near-geniuses, men of extraordinary gifts whose labors raise humanity to a higher plane.

A precocious child is one born with some faculties capable of extraordinary development. It may be neurotic or even, in certain respects, mentally deficient, but it is not necessarily so; and, indeed, these ills are more often than not the result of an unwise forcing of the child's special aptitudes, without regard to its physical and mental needs.

The training of a precocious child calls for care, wisdom and common sense. The child should have a well-balanced teacher, and should not be hurried. On the contrary, if the slightest injury is being done to the child's mental functions other than the one specially endowed, or to its physical health, it should be gently restrained.

Exercise is needed to develop any organ or faculty, but the exercise of one set of muscles or faculties exclusively leads to one-sidedness. Especially those who are by nature one-sided should exercise the other side. When development is properly regulated, when the mental faculties and physical health are both carefully looked after, precocity is not a misfortune, but a great fortune. The precocious child so safeguarded may prove to be that most precious gift to humanity—another genius.—*Youth's Companion*.

A FORTUNATE GIRL.

Thirty million dollars, just because she was beautiful!

And a poor girl—working girl—titled only, but because she was a poor working girl and also because she is the most beautiful working girl in all Austria-Hungary.

The girl is Ilona Vardis. She is 20 years old, and until she became a great heiress she worked in a fancy goods shop in Budapest, the Hungarian city so famous through-



Miss Ilona Vardis.

out the world for the beauty of its women. Ilona's parents were of the great masses, and nowhere are social distinctions more closely drawn than in Austria-Hungary. Ilona had to toil twelve hours a day in the shop, and if she dreamed of the fairy prince who seemed beyond reach she did not allow it to interfere with her work. Though she earned only \$5.20 a week, that is good pay for a shop girl in Hungary, and her parents needed the money to help keep the pot boiling. The great event in Ilona's life which meant the change in the whole story of her life came two years ago when a rich old man, Jean Kronyl, entered the shop to buy some needles. Like many other men, he was fascinated by her beauty, and he came there again, and again, each time buying something as a pretext for his visit.

Ilona did not know he was rich, for he wore paper cuffs and collars and a shabby coat. He was old, with deeply furrowed forehead and unkempt hair. Neither Ilona, or any other girl in the shop knew that he was Kronyl, the great millionaire, who owned vast quantities of real estate. Kronyl made discreet inquiries through detectives, and found that Ilona was as good as she was beautiful; and then began a remarkable quest. He travelled all over Hungary modest-

ly. Quietly he poked around in obscure corners of Budapest, and he even went to Vienna.

He had few friends, and they did not know the object of his journey, which did not leak out until after his death. The object was to find the prettiest working girl in Austria-Hungary; for, having no near relatives of his own, he had then and there decided to find the fairest of all working girls and make her the heir to his vast fortune. For two years he prosecuted his search, and then when he died he left a will bequeathing all that he possessed to the beautiful young shop girl. And now she is the richest heiress in Europe; and if she has not been wooed by all the eligible men she soon will be courted by most of them.

Kronyl's reason, as given in his will for his strange bequest, was that he wished to enable the prettiest shop girl to marry whomever she desired; for he said that it was unfair that she should be deprived of a suitable husband for lack of a dowry.

SNAKES THAT S'IT POISON.

The Ringhals of South Africa Will Do It at 6 or 8 Feet.

The phrase, "spitting venom," has long had a place among English figures of speech, but until recently men of science have held that it was the result of a misconception. Snakes could not spit forth their poison, it was believed; they must actually sink their fangs into an object in order to be dangerous. But a writer in the *National Geographic Magazine* says that some of the African—not the East Indian—cobras certainly spit poison at any one who disturbs them.

The ringhals, genus *Sepedon*, of southern Africa, is a pitch-black, exceedingly vicious cobra, that receives its name from one or two broad white bands that show on the neck when the snake is reared in fighting pose. When he arches his neck to glare at the intruder, he is able to eject fine jets of poison to a distance of six or eight feet. These deadly streams are dangerously well aimed.

The poison is ejected by contracting the lower jaw in such a fashion that the permanently erect fangs overlap it. At a movement of the head the reptile arches his adversary the reptile arches his neck till the head is thrown backward, bringing the tips of the hypodermic teeth to bear. The muscles over the poison-glands are contracted, and a thin stream of venom leaves each fang. The observer is liable to receive the poison directly in the eyes, and the amount thus ejected is surprising.

The writer has seen the entire lower part of a large glass panel peppered with tiny drops, and in photographing or observing the snakes, always protects his eyes with auto goggles. The front of his camera is often well spattered with tiny drops of poison, as the cobra becomes infuriated at the movements of the photographer's hands in focusing.

In one of his books Colonel Roosevelt tells how the explorer Tarlton was once struck in the eyes and nearly blinded by poison thus spit forth. Washing the eyes with milk was found to give the most speedy relief.

GROWING HAY FOR MARKET.

Timothy hay should be grown for market every time. The market

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wants clean timothy and will pay a price far beyond its feeding value; for that reason it pays to grow what the market calls for.

If we grow the best timothy we must plow our ground early and give it a thorough tillage for a number of weeks before the field is seeded. The mineral fertilizers should be thoroughly mixed with the soil and put down where they will be within reach of the great bulk of feeding roots and not on the surface where they will attract a growth of feeding roots and consequently shut off their supply of food if a drought occurs. This is of unusual importance in applying fertilizers to small grains and grass crops because the crops cannot be cultivated to conserve moisture.

We seed timothy about the second week in August without a nurse crop. We apply one-half bushel of seed to the acre with a common wheelbarrow seeder and cover it with a weeder or smoothing harrow and finish with a land roller to even the surface and bring up moisture so that the seeds will germinate quickly to make an even stand.

Can this system of growing hay be continued without injury to the land? Why not? The use of chemicals grows humus. Manures are composed largely of humus. What difference does it make whether we grow humus right on the field or haul it there? Theorists say we must haul it, but I believe if we keep our soils filled with grass roots that are fed by chemical plant foods it is possible to maintain the fertility of grass land.

Guest (timorously, on being presented with exorbitant bill)—Don't you think this is just the—least bit exorbitant? Landlord (blandly)—Oh, yes; just the least bit, not very much.

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MONTREAL.

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Which is his

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