

STORIES
POETRY

The Inglebrook

SKETCHES
TRAVEL

THE EASY AGE.

By Margaret P. Boyle.

According to old legends after Saturn had been cast down and dispossessed of his kingdom by his most unfilial son, Jupiter, he fled to Rome. There, perhaps because of the lesson he had learned from his troubles, he ruled so wisely and so well that his reign was called the Golden Age. Letters flourished, every one prospered, and a good time seemed to have come to Rome. As time passed on there came a decrease in prosperity, the interest in art and literature grew less, so though they still flourished, it was not as formerly. They shone with luster somewhat dimmed so the times were designated as the Silver Age. After many years the Goths swept down on Rome and ruled with cruelty so great that no better title could be found for the period than the Iron Age.

If we were to seek for a name for the times in which we live, it seems as if no more fitting one could be applied than that of the Easy Age. So much has been done to make life easy for us. All the magical powers of electricity have been placed at our command. The mere turn of button will flood a room with light. We can sit comfortably at home and by the same magic force talk with far distant friends. If we would hear the prima donnas of the opera or the skilful performers of the concert stage, we need not hesitate because of the price of seats or the expense of a suitable gown; instead one has but to invest in a talking machine or a phonograph. Then, for a mere trifle, he may get whatever record he chooses, and while he and his wife, in their everyday garments, sit comfortably at home, they may hear not alone one operatic star, but a half dozen in the same evening. And their pleasure will be alloyed with no troubling thoughts of hills for diamonds, flowers, a costly gown, extravagant seat ticket, and the depleted pocket book synonymous with a trip to the grand opera. Or if he would have lighter entertainment, the latest songs, the newest march, waltz, or polka, or the impersonator warranted to make one laugh, he needs only to insert our records and have whatever he may wish, in most metallic sounds, screeched into his ears. Who says this is not an easy age?

People of former times, like those of our own age sometimes partook too heartily of the good things provided for them. As a consequence much discomfort ensued as they suffered the pangs of a disordered stomach, the oppression of over-eating and the nameless ills which follow in the train of overloading that long suffering organ. One can now escape all this. At the nearest grocery, for the paltry sum of a quarter dollar, he may secure two boxes of food which is predigested. He has but to swallow a few spoonfuls of the stuff, and immediately, with no help from the digestive system, that mixture of seemingly excelsior and sawdust is transformed into brain, brawn and blood, making the lame to walk, the blind to see, the deaf to hear, and the sick and debilitated to rise with renewed health and vigor. Still one must query what is to become of that wonderful digestive system which, so soon as we are able to understand it, attracts our admiration and wonder. Is there not danger that as it falls into innocuous desuetude, other ills which not even predigested foods can cure will attack us?

Even the servant who presides over our kitchen is not forgotten. For her there are all sorts of labor saving devices, carpet sweepers, bread mixers, food choppers, sewing machines, egg beaters, vegetable cutters, cherry pitters,

any and everything which shall lighten toil.

The times in which we live afford too so much help to our physical appearance. I do not speak here of merely surface helps like powder, rouge, complexion beautifiers, and hair restorers. In various forms they have existed since the days of primitive man or woman. It has remained for the easy age, however, to suggest a plan by which any one dissatisfied with the features bestowed by nature may have them remoulded while he waits and suffers. If he has long been annoyed because his nose is retrouse, the wonder worker with unsatisfactory features can make it Grecian or Roman. A long pointed chin can gradually be changed into a rounded dimpled one. Raven tresses grow blonde or Titian, grey hair is quickly changed to its youthful color, and wrinkles are smoothed away at the earliest suggestion of their approach. From our earliest years many too, were our intellectual trials. Over and over again did we struggle with the mysteries of spelling, conning the letters over and over that each silent one might be in its proper place. Our childish eyes were filled with tears and our youthful brows furrowed with wrinkles because of the painful intricacies of etymology. Now the burden lifter who presides over the twentieth century suggests that we no longer confine ourselves to fixed rules and exceptions—instead let there be a reform in spelling, and each man write whatever combination of letters may seem to him to best express the words. And though the result may be surprising and a trifle confusing at times the process is certainly simple.

Our early days were saddened also by attempts to learn and comprehend hard rules about the subtractor and the subtrahend, the multiplier and the multiplicand, the divisor and the dividend. Now some imaginative adult plays a nice little game about taking away or building up, and before the child is aware a knowledge of the rudiments of arithmetic is acquired. Every branch of study is thus made easy. We have "Hiawatha Primers" and "Evangeline Lessons" where extracts from the beautiful original are sandwiched in between prose transcripts of the poems. The funny part of it all is that the children all skip the prose and read the poetry.

Among the most recent efforts of this kind is that of the manly man who has attempted to make easy Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales, and has put the Ugly Duckling and the other old favorites into childish language. We have Shakespeare made easy, the Bible made easy, science, history, poetry and mythology, all diluted until they are of the proper intellectual strength for the juvenile mind. Whether the mind will grow as in the days when there was more effort needed for the acquisition of knowledge is another question which time only can solve.

This easy method of teaching by objects is extended even to the Sunday-school. One especially resourceful teacher represents the twelve apostles by clothes pins, the color of each pin suggesting the characteristic of its name. Thus Judas would appropriately be painted with black of the deepest dye, Peter's fiery temper could be best denoted by scarlet, and so on.

This kindly spirit of helpfulness is offered also for the aid of us grown people. If perplexed by any social or moral question one need no longer struggle for a correct solution. If some difference of opinion arises between lover and sweetheart, between husband and wife or brother and sister, the matter may be easily adjusted by referring the whole affair to some friendly editor.

The story will then be laid before the public with advice which the questioner's own common sense should have suggested in the first place. How to treat one's fiancé, how to behave toward one's callers, how to walk and how to talk may all be settled by the same editorial authority. What a relief to know whether a man caller shall care for his own hat and coat, or whether one shall eat asparagus with his fork or fingers. All this knowledge may be obtained without money and without price, simply by a letter of inquiry to one's favorite periodical. If in financial straits also, and worried by the serious problem of how to save for a home on nothing a year, these same publications will again come to the aid of the anxious and in all solemnity will advise how this seemingly impossible feat may be accomplished, a starvation diet proving a most important factor.

Another proposition for making this an easy age has recently been set forth, this time by a medical man. The care of the aged, the helpless and the incurables must of necessity exact much time from the pleasures and duties of life. So it is proposed as much easier and wiser for all concerned to administer a soothing potion which shall speedily lull the sufferer into the sleep which knows no waking. This proposition may at first seem a little hard hearted but why should sentiment or affection stand in the way of ease and pleasure? Why spend one's strength and time in caring for an aged, feeble parent? Why remember with gratitude all that same parent did for you in infancy? How much better as signs of failing health appear to call in the medical executioner and ask his professional aid in relieving you of that care and burden. Thus will be established a great help toward making life less arduous.

In an age famous for ease it is, too, not fitting that women should be obliged to devote so much time and trouble to the cares of motherhood. So one of the burden lifters advises that the mother shall no longer have the care of her children. Rather let some well fitted person be chosen for the position. Let her assume all the care and training of the children of the particular household where she is employed and all the responsibility of making them good men and women. At stated periods the mother may be permitted to see her offspring and note the progress made. By this arrangement, according to us old-fashioned folk, the child might suffer from the lack of mother love and caresses, which to many of us serve as beautiful memories all our lives. But on the other hand think of the ease which the mother will enjoy, and is not this the easy age?

But after all these efforts to lighten the burdens of life and make living easier, there still remained unsolved the marriage problem. Everything legally possible was done. Divorce laws were made more and more lax, but still there were cases where no cause for release could be found, and the contracting parties found themselves really "in for life". So there was certainly a great need to be met. In view of this a well known English writer makes a new suggestion. He proposes that marriages shall be contracted for ten years only. Then at a given signal, all shall change partners and enter the grand march toward life under new conditions. But even yet there remains a slight difficulty: that is, what shall become of the children? So it is to be provided by law that when the time comes for their parents to separate, these children shall be taken in charge and liberally provided for by the State.

So in view of all these aids to easy living who would not rejoice that he