

SONG OF THE WHEEL.

MY BICYCLING FRIEND.

(A Sketch.)

He's tall, well built, has golden hair.
You'd surely call him "light compacted";
Upon his lip waxed out with care—
A faint moustache can be detected.
His eyes are blue, his mouth a bow—
A coral-tinted are of Cupid;
Outside of cycling things he's slow,
In fact I've heard some one call him stupid.

He's versed in wire and nickel plate,
In rubber tires and hubs and handles,
In pigskin seats, in tolling rate,
In lamps, and patent sperm oil candles.
He knows what roads are in good shape—
The best hotels in country places;
He ne'er gets mail when called an ape
By youthful "vags," with rare grimaces.

Where'er he rides he makes a "dash."
The girls all say he's quite a dandy;
They wonder if he's lots of cash,
And whether he'll "put up" much candy.
He's been engaged six times or more,
To girls he's ne'er been introduced to.
But as he's only aged a score,
Why! marry he can't be induced to.

His talk is all of cycling things,
Of trikes and bikes and paths of cinder.
He calls his wheel a brace of rings,
And says he can naught to hinder
An age when all on earth will go
On wire spoked wheels of some description;
He's up to every wheeling show,
And knows for hurts the best prescription.

He wears eye-glasses on his nose;
His tone of voice is soft, low and lazy;
His boots have very pointed toes—
I know he thinks himself a daisy.
He's full of cycling yarns and songs,
And brings them out without much coaxing;
To air his knowledge much he longs,
And often tries his hand at coaxing.

My cycling friend may not be smart,
But still I like his cheery manner.
And love him for his kind, warm heart—
They give to him a "Welcome!" banner.
He is a flirt, I grant you that,
But I've seen many a worse than he is.
And though not sharp, he's not the "flat"
That people say full many a she is.

W. C. NICHOL.

TOPICAL TEACHING.

BY LILLIE L. VOIGT, BRIDGEWATER, MASS.

"This is the house that Jack built.
This is the malt that lay in the house that Jack built.
This is the rat that ate the malt that lay in the house that Jack built.
This is the cat that caught the rat that ate the malt that lay in the house that Jack built.
This is the dog that worried the cat that caught the rat that ate the malt that lay in the house that Jack built."

As surely as the delicate tracery found in the hard rock, far below the surface of the earth, indicates the existence long ago of the fern, whose graceful outline is now all that remains, so surely do these lines bear record of their origin; and that origin was topical teaching. Every element is here. *Observe*.—This is the house that Jack built. It is very evident from the way in which the facts are stated, that Jack was already a well-known personage. The teaching begins with, and takes for a foundation, that which is already known.

Proceeding.—The first new idea introduced is the house, and here, at the very outset, the thing itself is presented to the mind. Not, "Once upon a time there was a house that Jack built," after the manner of the old story-tellers; not a picture of the house, nor a plan of it, nor yet a long description; but "This is the house that Jack built." Here it is; look at it; observe it; go all over it from garret to cellar. "This is the malt that lay in the house that Jack built." Here, again, the "This is"; and we acquire this idea by precisely the same method as was used before;—by examining, studying the thing itself.

So we go on, step by step; individually and severally the rat, the cat, the dog come under our observation, till we reach the ultimate object of our study in this direction, and triumphantly announce, "This is the cow with a crumpled horn that tossed the dog that worried the cat that caught the rat that ate the malt that lay in the house that Jack built." And to any doubter who questions the important bearing of this knowledge on some science of the olden time I would reply, in the words of the oracular Jack Bunsby, "Whereby, why not? If so, what odds! Can any man say otherwise? No. A vast, then!"

Up to this point we have been placing ourselves in the attitude of the scholar; have followed his train of thought, and observed the working of his mind. Let us now station ourselves by the side of the teacher, and view the thing from his standpoint. The scholar has simply to concentrate his energies on the objects that are presented to his mind, one by one, and by so doing he has at last, as we have seen, distinct and connected ideas, not only of the individual objects, but also of their connection with, and relation to, each other; but the teacher's work is far more comprehensive. He has to know the things themselves, in their relation and order of dependence, and also to arrange the work so that they shall be brought before his pupils in their natural order. He has, perchance, to tramp through meadow and marsh, through brake and brier for his delinquent bovine; and to brave all sorts of dangers before he has his procession of the cow, the dog, the cat, the rat, the malt, and the house (with

Jack in the background), marshalled ready to present to his class. For let me tell you, this obtaining and preparing of illustrations is no small item in the teacher's work.

Suppose the teacher, omitting all the careful preparation, comes down on his defenceless pupils like a thunderbolt with, "This is the cow with a crumpled horn that tossed the dog that worried the cat that caught the rat that ate the malt that lay in the house that Jack built." And teachers often do expect pupils to learn statements fully as complex as this, with the additional difficulty, that the terms used and the thoughts expressed are more abstract and puzzling to the pupil than those in the illustration I have taken. What wonder, then, that the unfortunate scholars are simply paralyzed by the avalanche of words, for to them they will be, can be, nothing but words! What wonder that, not knowing where to begin nor what to do, they oftentimes do nothing at all. They may have a confused idea that the lesson has something to do with a cow, and a rat and a dog, and malt (and the chances are two to one that they will not have the faintest glimmering of light on the malt matter); but, as to their carrying away any definite ideas, that is utterly out of the question.

There is a mistaken idea prevalent among those who have not studied the matter, as to the meaning of the word *topics*. They say, "They may do very well for some grades of schools, but in the primary schools you cannot use them." Why not? *Topics are simply distinct subjects of thought.* Surely the teacher may give the child his lesson in distinct subjects of thought. The child no more needs to know the system and method by which his mind is built up and developed than he needs to know the chemical and cohesive forces acting in the food by which his body is nourished. But it is important that in the primary school, of all places, the habits of thinking, feeling, and acting that are forming, and that are to be the basis of the future character, should be right habits.

Although the tendency of all teaching at the present day is in the direction of this method in substance, if not in name, yet the fact remains that there are some, and not a few, who practically condemn topical teaching. They usually belong to one of three classes: *First*, those who have tried to teach topically and failed. *Second*, those who haven't time to teach from topics. *Third*, those who think it is too much work, and doesn't pay for the trouble.

What grounds have those who have tried and failed for their objections? "Good ground," they say; "we know whereof we affirm. The system has been 'tried in the balances and found wanting.' That is their testimony, honestly given; and why! Imagine such a teacher, fresh from the precincts of a Normal School, fully persuaded that topics are to be the basis of her teaching. She has topic-books, — yes, indeed, — topic-books by the dozen; and the affection of the average normal pupil for his topic-books none but a normal pupil can comprehend, not even those who have heard some despairing mortal mournfully exclaim, 'Everything I knew was in that topic-book, and now I've lost it!' The teacher begins her work. The priceless topics that beguiled many an hour of solitude for her must surely be just what the children need; so they are introduced into her school, *verbatim et litteratim*, without regard to the age and intellectual capacity of her pupils. Of course her way of teaching is a failure, not through any fault in the theory, which she attempts to follow out, but through her own inability to adapt the topics to the needs of those particular scholars.

Then, too, there is another error into which the teacher may fall. It is possible for scholars to learn topics just as they would any statement given them in the text-book. That they can recite topics and whole outlines, and give definitions and statements glibly, proves nothing beyond the fact that they can learn words as easily in one place as in another, — from the board, or the slate, or the book, written or printed, — it makes no difference. These things the teacher must do if she would be successful. First make sure that the topics are *thoroughly understood*; afterward, by questioning, by applications, by requiring it in very possible form, *for the thought*, as well as its expression, firmly in the mind.

But what of those whose plea is lack of time; who have so many scholars, so many classes, that they cannot use topics, although they would like to? Their very excuse is the strongest argument that could be adduced in favour of topical teaching. If there are so many classes that the teacher cannot find time to teach in the right way, obviously the first thing to be done is to reduce the number of classes. The school can be most easily regraded by arranging the work in outline, and giving lessons in distinct subjects, rather than in pages of the book. This topical teaching prepares the way for itself; and since it is often impossible, on account of the number or varying ages of the pupils, for the teacher to reduce the classes, so that he can have all the time that he feels he needs for each recitation, there is the more need of having every lesson arranged beforehand, that none of the little time he has be wasted.

The same reasoning applies to the class whose excuse is, "I have just so much to accomplish in the time the class is in my charge. The teachers from whom they have come teach from the book; the teachers who come after me use

the book. I have barely time to get them started in the right way; and in the examinations at the end of the year they will be behind-hand." Try it, and see. If there is a right way to teach, and you know that way, no matter when or where, nor for how short a time you teach, teach in the right way.

There remains yet another class of teachers, — those who say, "It is so much work; this way of teaching puts all the work upon the teacher, and leaves the scholar nothing to do." They maintain that since the use of topics does away with books altogether, the teacher's time is taken up with devising ways and means to keep the pupils busy.

To begin with, topics, so far from supplementing books, teach the pupils *how to use books*, so as to derive the greatest benefit from them. Then, as to the teacher's work in finding employment for his pupils, even if he uses the books wholly, lessons that would keep the child busy all through the school-hours would be much more than he is capable of taking in at one time. The usual way, with such teaching, is to assign him a lesson of moderate length, which he will learn (if he learns it at all) in a very short time, and then he can, and will give his undivided attention to mischief if he is a "bad little boy," or sit discursively idle if he is a "good little boy." Other employment must be provided for them with either system; so that objection falls to the ground.

The real reason for their being so "backward in coming forward" in the work is laziness. Was there ever a good teacher who did not work, and work hard? In the very nature of things this must be so. In every age the degree of lasting success attained in any undertaking is measured by the earnest, honest, hard work put into it. Why not in school-work as well as elsewhere? The teacher, who, seeing and acknowledging the right way, will deliberately sit down and say, "It is too much work, it does not pay to do it;" who is content to be a mere machine, without one atom of originality or one spark of enthusiasm; who is willing to hear her scholars drone on day after day, mere empty, meaningless words, feeling all the time that they are but words, making no effort to interest or to instruct, is unworthy the name of teacher.

And now, what can we do to *prove* that the system of topical teaching is what we claim for it? There is one way, — only one: "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of whistles? Wherefore by their fruits we shall know them."

ECHOES FROM LONDON.

LONDON, June 23.

We hear that the Covent Garden Theatre is ere long to be lit with the electric light.

The authorities are in treaty for *The Rover*, Lord Eglington's splendid yacht.

The American amateur actors intend to erect a theatre for themselves in New York, which will be of some magnificence.

A LARGE "gathering of the clans" takes place to-day in honor of the immortal Burns. Chingford is the rendezvous.

The Coventry Club has retained the services of the Hungarian band for Sunday evening service. No doubt it will prove a great attraction.

EARLY next month the Agricultural Hall will give an exhibition of engineering of almost every description. It will be interesting and instructive.

A commencement will soon be made with Mr. Wyndham's theatre in Northumberland Avenue. The plans are "through." It is difficult to realize, but they are.

We understand that the smallest picture exhibited at the Royal Academy this year by Mr. Robert Page (youngest son of Mr. James Page, of Great Clacton), has been sold there for 100 guineas.

MR. IRVING BRISTOL will give no more performances or take part in no more divinations in London, at least, not for the present. He is going on a farewell tour through the provinces.

SEVERAL of our large bookmakers are anxious to lay fair odds, from a "pony" up to a "thousand," against Mr. Bishop's knowing the number of a bank-note which they are prepared to deposit.

THE cellar of wine of the late Mr. Walter Powell, M.P., who was lost in a balloon, is to be sold by auction, at Messrs. Christie & Manson's, in about a week's time. The deceased gentleman was famous for his choice wines.

ALREADY there is a report that there is to be a grand sportsman's exhibition next year in London. If done in a thorough way, and we have not seen that attained yet in any exhibition, it ought to be an event of exceedingly great interest.

We have received this statement:—"As a desire was expressed by the Dean of Westminster to purchase the license of a public-house for £3,000, a thousand pounds was immediately subscribed and presented to him." Imagination is left to its full play.

CERTAINLY not before it was wanted, a new kind of sea bathing-machine has been invented and patented. It is the production of Mr. Westman of Birmingham; it is neat in appearance, well lighted and ventilated, commodious, and well appointed. The old machine on the coast is, at best, a very filthy affair.

It is gratifying to find that the International Fisheries Exhibition promises to be a financial success. Upwards of £600,000 has already been taken.

A SWEET thing in the exhibition way has been opened at Heidelberg, namely, an exhibition of confectionery of all nations. One hundred and fifty German confectioners, besides French, Swiss, Italian, English, and North American, have sent in contributions. Something of the same kind would suit London taste.

THERE is some probability of one or two of the dramatic critics accompanying Mr. Irving to America in the character of special correspondents. The tour will, in fact, be conducted almost on the scale of a hostile expedition into an enemy's country, and some record of its progress would be interesting at home.

It is understood that the artificial arrangement by which Italian Opera is excluded from Drury Lane and pantomime from Covent Garden is about to fall through. We may, therefore, look next season for a renewal of the time-honored rivalry between Drury Lane and Covent Garden in the matter of pantomime.

THE latest acquisition at the British Museum is a colossal marble female head, discovered in a temple at Sarotis by Mr. Dennis. The head measures over four feet in height, and is supposed to be that of the Empress Faustina. The entire figure must have measured about 24 feet, and was probably seated. The head is interesting from its enormous size, and the place in which it was found, more than from any actual beauty in the work.

THE *Scottish American* raises a note of warning to intending emigrants from the mother country. "We wish," it says, "to inform them that the present year is not propitious for persons seriously proposing to come to America, at least in so far as regards the United States. Thus far the year is without a parallel in history for floods and cyclones, calamitous in nearly every State."

THE London Swimming Club has perfected an apparatus, very inexpensively, whereby the novice is sustained upon the water whilst learning, and with or without a tutor can take the preliminary lessons without fear of immersing the head; it enables them to lay calmly on the breast or back, and thus discard all fear. The apparatus can as easily be put over a pool of water as in a bath; thus gentlemen who have ornamental water in their gardens or grounds can add this attraction to their suburban retreats at a small cost.

By an odd coincidence Captain Molloy, who on Friday night came into collision with the coping stone of a building in or near Fleet street, had a question on the paper with respect to the collision of the *Wace* with a French lugger in the English Channel the other week. The gallant captain was not present to put this question, but in return there were many inquiries as to the state of his health after his accident. In the absence of Captain Molloy Mr. O'Donnell put the question.

THE time is fast advancing for Lord Coleridge and his suite of barristers to visit America, and we are sure they will have a hearty wish for their safe arrival. We have seen this remark before, in plagiarising it, we will add, and safe return, which we observe was forgotten. The legal profession is powerful in every country, but it seems to be paramount in the United States. "In no country in the world," said Burke fully a century ago, with reference to America, "is law so general a study!" and this remark still holds good. Law is, and always has been, regarded there as a road leading to all greatness. Usually about two-thirds of the members of Congress are lawyers. They swarm in journalism. They become "railroad men" or great financiers. They pull the wires, organize parties, and play a political part altogether out of proportion to that which belongs to the same class here.

SKILL IN THE WORKSHOP.—To do good work the mechanic must have good health. If long hours of confinement in close rooms have enfeebled his hand or dimmed his sight, let him at once, and before some organic trouble appears, take plenty of Hop Bitters. His system will be rejuvenated, his nerves strengthened, his sight become clear, and the whole constitution be built up to a higher working condition.