



Life, Literature and Education.

[Contributions on all subjects of popular interest are always welcome in this Department.]

PEOPLE, BOOKS, AND DOINGS.

By a curious mistake, Sir Conan Doyle, whose engagement was recently announced, was given credit, in widely-copied press notices, for being a bachelor. It now appears that Sir Conan was married many years, his wife having died about a year ago. He has a son and a daughter, both grown-up.

Mrs. Isabel Ecclestone Mackay, of Woodstock, Ont., has won a prize of one hundred dollars for a historical poem, which will appear in the Christmas Globe.

During this summer, thirty-five of the American Rhodes Scholars at Oxford will return to the United States.

That William de Morgan should begin writing novels at the advanced age of sixty-seven, is surely a phenomenon in the literary world. He was born in 1840, and published his first book, "Joseph Vance," in 1906. Another novel from his pen, "Alice for Short," has been issued this year.

COUNTRY LIFE AND CULTURE. ENVIRONMENT.

Nature, the dream that wraps us round,
One comforting and saving whole,
And as the clothes to the body of man,
The mantle of the soul.

In connection with the human environment, the two most tremendous influences are day and night. How little we realize the wonderful personality of these two divisions of the twenty-four hours. To most of us, day is the time allotted for toil, and night for oblivion, one succeeding the other in a wearisome routine, which sadly represents so many lives.

In the city, the artificial conditions of life often compel many toilers to work all night and sleep the most of the day, thus reversing the order of things as nature intended. But, in the country places, whatever difficulties he may have to contend with, man is close to, and should be in perfect sympathy with, these two great gifts of Providence for the development of human happiness. In the country, day and night are not merely light and dark, but vastly more.

The day, even for the constant toiler, must have, and does have, its myriad influences and inspirations appealing to the soul. From the time of earliest cock-crow and the faint line of golden or ruddy light ushering in the dawn, until the homing cattle and the first early star whisper of departing day—the whole procession of time is one volume of exquisite poetry, appealing to the natural and sensitive soul.

Then, what of night, when in the dim, late twilight, or out under the stars of midnight or early dawn? If man be not sleeping the sleep of the weary, he can, like the patriarchs of old, witness and drink into his soul those vast spaces and their mystic

symbols of the origin, history and destiny of the race. This is an environment which is the very greatest of all, whose influence on the soul and whole character, while for the most part unconscious, is ever present to the country-dweller, and must, in the long run, have a tremendous effect on personality. This must be the reason why the greatest poets, the greatest discoverers and philosophers were reared in the country.

The city-dweller, in spite of all his so-called social advantages, by reason of his alienation from these great aspects of nature, as seen by hillside and moor, this close down-brooding of heaven and up-dreaming of earth, this whispering and moaning of winds and voice of waters, this eternal kiss of sun and air on brow and cheek—loses what not all the cloth of gold and fine linen of social life may give; that mystic tonic of soul and body, that immortal song which nature sings in the ears of her shepherds and plowboys.

We must first have the true man ere we can hope to produce the gentleman. And where should we find our true gentlemen and gentlewomen, if not in the country? And this large, this impressive, this eternal environment of day and night, in its everlasting influence, its appeal to what is best in the man and the woman, is the first essential in the development of human culture.

There can be no doubt that the importance and happiness of human life depends largely on how man makes use of these two divisions of the twenty-four hours.

We have long forgotten the old proverb, "Early to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise." How far this is true, must be left to each man to judge for himself; but, on the whole, it is the truth. It is a fact that he who sleeps during the night is healthier than he who wastes his hours awake, and then endeavors to rest in the late morning. But this is no reason why the student should not sometimes burn the midnight oil. I have also known farmers to rise early and work late, getting little rest. This crowding too much into the day is as foolish as doing too little.

The day is not for labor alone, as the night is not only for sleep. Out of both humanity should set aside hours for recreation and self-improvement, just as the seventh day is set apart in the week, and the portion of the garden is set aside for flowers. Life was not intended to be all toil, any more than it was to be all tears. The sane arrangement of the day and night will determine much, if not all, in a human lifetime. The country home, where all is hurry and drive from dawn to dusk, and often long after, can never be a happy or attractive one; and into such a home no true culture can ever enter. That dignified poise of life, that quiet, consistent tone of responsibility which allots the daily duty, without slavery, is the ideal one; and it is quite possible to work hard on a farm and yet consecrate certain portions of the day and night to the poetry and dreams of existence. The social environment is one which must not be ignored in any community; and where more than in the country? He who owns a hundred acres of the soil of

any county or township should be one worthy of his ownership and responsibility. Is it not strange that a man who lives in a town, and toils behind a counter for a small salary, should be particular as to his person, his manner, his dress, his deportment and speech; and yet he who is a free owner of the land, a landlord in a small way, and independent of others for his living, should often be so careless in all of these really important matters? It is not insinuated here that a farmer should be a fop, and afraid of soiling his hands. On the other hand, of the two classes, even with his occasional lack of refinement, the countryman is the true man. But the pity is that, while he is the manlier by reason of his more natural environment and more independent position, the farmer should not more often acquire somewhat of the refinement which is so necessary to social ideals and happiness. Culture, in the country as well as in the town, must always presuppose dignity and deportment. A man does not need a university education to enable him to speak and act properly. He does not need the life of a metropolis to teach him how to behave at table or in a social gathering. There are a thousand and one little decencies and proprieties of life which can be acquired and maintained on the farm, as well as in the city, and without destroying any of that boasted democratic independence upon which so many rural dwellers pride themselves. This is a very delicate subject, but one, nevertheless, which needs to be well considered. We have had, on this continent, a wrong idea that mere carelessness as to how we dress, or eat, or perform our toilet, and who we consort with and what we do, read or think, is a sign of a democratic spirit, which ranks as a virtue among many people.

There was a dignity, a grave simplicity and a conservative pride about the ordinary country people of Scotland which is missing on this continent. This all went with a pride in race and an attachment to a locality, or a principle of life, which is lacking in the average American community. There is nothing so contemptible as vulgarity, and there is no vulgarity so repellent as that of the shoddy clothes, the cheap jewelry, and the ostentation of the moneyed class without culture.

It is not in outward show or mere vulgar display that society is improved, but in that simple and dignified environment which is real; where the manners are easy without being overbearing, where the whole household is in good taste, from the style of furniture to the pictures on the walls. The very food one eats may be, and should be, of the simplest. But the manner in which it is served, the refined breakfast or dinner table, the delicate service—all have a wonderful effect in their influence on character, as well as health. The rooms where one lives for a good portion of one's lifetime, should, in an age like this, be at least healthy, in good taste, and artistic. When, even in towns and cities, the soul is appalled by the vast amount of loud and vulgar wall papers and flashy carpets, the ugly, cheap and shoddy furniture, the ghostly sideboards, and

other veneered monstrosities, which are sold at outrageous prices, and make a home hideous, one can scarcely be amazed that so much of this is also to be found in the country.

Furniture was intended, originally, for use, and there was, in the old days, not so much of it; but what there was was solid and lasting. The overcrowding of bedrooms and dining-rooms and parlors with all sorts of things, simply because our neighbors do likewise, is a very foolish fashion to follow. Thank goodness, the cheap chromo has been banished with the old "God bless our home" motto which used to hang on so many walls; and the excruciating parlor organ has followed these, with the seed and hair wreaths enclosing coffin plates in glass cases, into that oblivion of all ephemeral and vulgar fashions.

How could one expect any taste, any culture to develop when such things existed. But even these were an improvement on the conditions when the weekly paper and the old-time almanac were the sole household representations of literature and humor. These influences were quite natural when the settlers lived in the backwoods, when anything was a solace or an adornment. But in an old-settled community, well to do, and in reach of large towns and cities, there can be no more excuse among the better classes of the community for the crudities and vulgarities of rural life. The environment of the prosperous country home should be, for many reasons, superior to that of the town. What a delight, what a pleasure to visit, even in imagination, the ideal country home. Leaving the close and crowded din and noise of the city, we travel by rail or carriage to some spot beloved of the fates, removed from the jar of trade and commerce. There are many such spots in Ontario, perchance on some inland hillside, or by a dreamy river-bank, where giant elms spread their umbrous branches over summer lands. Following the rural road, we come at last, by quaint vistas of wooded hillsides and pastured hollows, to some well-kept gateway, giving entrance to an overshaded drive, leading by charming hedges and well-kept lawn and garden enclosure, to the precincts of a dignified and picturesque mansion, bearing on its outward front all the appearance of a comfortable and dignified home—the ideal cradle of the better-class men and women of the Canadian rural stock. It may be square and massive, with solid chimney-stacks, or it may show a quaint gable through its grove of surrounding trees and shrubberies. But its general air of dignity and reserve, facing on its trimmed lawn, proclaims it the residence of a man or woman who should hand down family traditions of honor, taste, culture and ambition worthy of any county history in Canada or the Old Land. We would expect that such a place and the lands it represents would have a name. There is a charm in those old-world names which have for centuries identified a certain family with certain lands. There are old associations, memories, connected with love, birth and death, even man's sadness, which will make hallowed a family fireside. Here, in a