



Life, Literature and Education.

The thousands of students in the Province of Ontario will welcome the announcement that henceforth the papers for the Departmental Examinations will be set exclusively by teachers. The new plan will, no doubt, insure a closer adherence to the curriculum of the schools, and the chances are that the old complaints of tests set outside of the work actually gone over will be heard no more.

A lithographed plan for the beautification of the City of Toronto, prepared, after much inquiry and study, at the instance of the Civic Guild of the city, has been submitted for the inspection of Sir Aston Webb, the English authority on the planning and laying-out of cities. Would that the æsthetic sentiment which has prompted the Guild to this movement might also penetrate the Chambers where sit the sages of our rural municipalities. The "country" is, of itself, naturally beautiful, but the clearing away of the woods, and the consequent drying-up of the streams is fast doing away with the natural beauty and resolving it into an uninteresting expanse of bare fields and farmhouses. Surely something can be done, with comparatively little trouble and expense, to counteract the effect of this continual dead-levelling. The effect of dull, monotonous, uninteresting surroundings on the human mind is too well known to brook overlooking.

Our esteemed contemporary, "Mac," of the Toronto Saturday Night, refers, in a recent issue, to the taste for reading accounts of murders and crimes, which seems to have become an obsession with the mind of the populace at large—a taste to which, as those who know it can aver, Saturday Night does not cater. In illustration, he quotes from a letter received by him not long since from a small vendor of periodicals, who apologized for the meagreness of his order by concluding: "The people round here are crazy for people getting murdered and killed." Evidently, more sensational papers were in better demand, and the newsy, having deduced his own conclusions as to human nature, had decided to direct his speculations in accordance.

It is, perhaps, unnecessary to remark that "The Farmer's Advocate" heartily endorses the stand taken by Saturday Night on this matter. There is nothing elevating to be gained by reading long, detailed accounts of crime and wickedness, and time might be much better spent. Then, there is always the possibility of infinite evil as an outcome of such suggestion upon the weak or susceptible mind. "Epidemics of crime" are by no means unknown, and have been traced in almost every instance to the publication in all its filthiest and most morbid details, of some peculiarly atrocious and fiendish crime. The power of suggestion, either for good or

ill, is as subtle as tremendous, and is only of late beginning to be understood. In refusing to publish evilly-suggestive details in regard to current events, "The Farmer's Advocate" trusts that it has the approbation of its readers. The people of the rural districts, we dare to hope, are not "crazy for people getting murdered and killed."

When addressing the jury, recently, at the conclusion of the inquest into the death of Marie La Blanche, who died of injuries sustained while sliding down a wire before the grandstand at Toronto Exhibition, last August, Chief Coroner Dr. A. J. Johnson spoke strongly in denunciation of all spectacular feats involving danger. "There is no reason that I can see," he said, "why the morbid desire of part of the public to see these so-called 'thrillers' should be gratified and pandered to by the Exhibition, or by anybody else. . . . Toronto is proud of its Canadian National Exhibition, but I am sure these 'thrillers' are not necessary to keep it a success." It is to be hoped that Dr. Johnson's stand in regard to this matter may have some effect with the authorities who arrange for the entertainment supplied during the exhibition. If "part of the public" is to be pandered to—and it goes without saying that one element or another must be pleased—it certainly should be the better class, not the lower, to whose mental make-up the "thriller" more especially recommends itself.

Moreover, so drastic a step as cutting out the thriller from the programme of the Big Fair could scarcely fail to attract widespread attention to the evil itself, and the result would no doubt react favorably upon lesser programmes, presented over a very large area. Popular amusements, like other things, are largely imitative, and if the C. N. E. can succeed in introducing new and novel features in which the danger element has no place, but which depend upon appeal to higher faculties for their effect, other institutions whose business it is to provide entertainment for the public will soon follow suit.

Dr. L. S. Manson, one of the expert medical witnesses at the Hains trial, has testified that Captain Hains was suffering from impulsive insanity when he shot William E. Annis, in New York, last August. It would be interesting to know the precise difference between impulsive insanity and the simple outburst of a fierce temper. Or can it be possible that there is, in reality, no difference? And may the so-called "bad-tempered" take unto themselves for the future the rather questionable comfort of reflecting that they are not really bad-tempered—only insane?

Mr. Pinchot, the representative of the United States Government to Canada and Mexico, in connection with the proposal for continental co-operation for the conservation of the natural resources of North America, states that, owing to the cultivation of the land, 800,000,000 cubic tons

of soil are each year being washed into the rivers of this continent, thereby weakening the soil and interfering with navigation. He also states that the forests are being cut down three and a half times as fast as they are growing, and that the portions of land suffering the greatest soil denudation are those from which the trees, as yet the best soil-holders known, have been entirely cleared. Putting the premises together, the advisability of judicious forest-harvesting and of extensive tree-planting, especially in such places as are greatly exposed to washing-out after rains, may appear.

People, Books and Doings.

A new German tenor, Herr Tameni, whose voice is said to rival that of Caruso, is being received with much enthusiasm by European audiences.

Mr. Thomas A. Edison has invented a practical storage battery for power-propelled cars, which will do away, so he thinks, with poles and power-houses. The batteries will run 100 miles without recharging.

King Manuel, of Portugal, is in a very poor state of health.

Mme. Jousselin, the first woman judge in France, took the oath of office recently. She is Judge in the Council des Prudhommes, a tribunal which decides certain disputes in trade.

The new Constitutional Government of Turkey is about to undertake the irrigation, for agricultural purposes, of the area lying between the Tigris and the Euphrates, a strip containing some 3,000,000 acres of cultivable land. This country is really a vast alluvial plain of inexhaustible fertility, and includes the traditional site of the Garden of Eden. An Englishman is to undertake the work.

The history of literature is full of examples of women authors who have successfully masqueraded as men, among them such well-known writers as George Eliot, George Sand, Currer and Ellis Bell, Charles Egbert Craddock, and John Oliver Hobbes; but there are very few instances of the opposite. Some time ago, an Englishman wrote "An English Woman's Love Letters," but he was suspected from the first. The most notable exception is, perhaps, that of the late William Sharp, who for many years wrote, undetected, as a woman, "Fiona Macleod."

In an article published in *Les Annales*, upon Victor Hugo, we are told that the publication of his famous novel, "Les Misérables," was an international event. The book appeared simultaneously in Paris, Brussels, Leipzig, London, Milan, Madrid, Warsaw, Rotterdam, Iest, and Rio Janeiro. The 7,000 copies of the first edition were sold out in Paris within two days, and for a month the firm were printing new copies unceasingly night and day. The success, even for those times, when readers still wept over the distresses of heroines, and were kept awake at night bemoaning the fate of handsome heroes, was unprecedented. Letters poured in, numerous as snowflakes from enthusiastic readers.

and in one week only Paul Meurice counted epistles from nine women saying that they had just christened their babies either Marius or Cosette. So much adulation could not but produce a little heartburning among other authors. Jealousy is a very natural and unavoidable emotion among those working equally hard at the same trade. Barbey d'Aurevilly was among the first to write violently in abuse of *Les Misérables*, but he was very soon joined by others, and in one year no fewer than fourteen books were published, written in hot-blooded derision of "Les Misérables."—T. P.'s Weekly.

Spelling Reform.

III.

In these letters, discussing the simplification of our spelling, nothing is further from my purpose than to defend or encourage carelessness in the art. There is no obvious reason why we should be so greatly more careful of spelling than of the arts of expression, such as pronunciation, syntax and penmanship. Certainly, there is nothing so peculiarly sacred about the unique collection of inconsistencies which we call English spelling that the children in our schools should be held back in their other studies a year or two while they are memorizing the more or less haphazard forms that suited the whims of the not very scholarly printers of two centuries ago.

By way of experiment, to illustrate the respective effects of bad spelling and bad writing as a hindrance to the communication of thought, I placed a page of each of two letters in the hands of several readers. The badly-misspelled letter—it contained the forms, "beleive," "although," "ninety-ninth," "hopefull," "expekte," "takeing"—was plainly written. The spelling of the badly-written one, being from the pen of an educational official, was presumably perfect—no one could be sure it wasn't. The misspelled page was invariably read at sight, intelligently, and without hesitation; the other, if struggled through at all, was read with much halting, difficulty and uncertainty. Considering the purposes of the two arts for the mass of the people, it is hard to explain why Dame Fashion tolerates so complacently the hardly decipherable scrawling of sentences, and at the same time contemns so haughtily the occasional misplacement of a letter. Anyone who seriously considers the time and effort available for real education, which is spent by the average child after attaining reasonable proficiency in spelling, in memorizing a multitude of orthographical puzzles, will concede that we are paying too dearly for our spelling whistle. A British journal, *T. P.'s Weekly*, referring to this waste of time, asks: "May we not be too anxious to teach spelling? We must have standard spelling for print, but why should private spelling be made a test or an agony?"

In penmanship, there is no only one right way of forming letters. A style that is easy to write, easy to read and pleasing to look at, is a