

Dr. Maria Montessori

The Women's Institute.

Books We Should Read and Why.

[A paper read by Miss Augustine at a meeting of the Aughtin branch of the Women's Institute.]

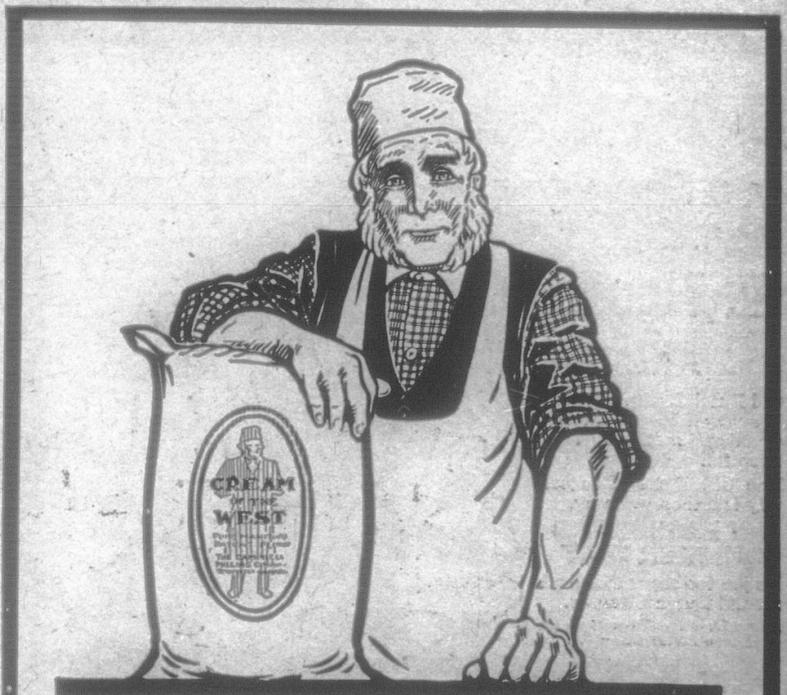
Books are our friends and companions that gain admittance to the innermost recesses of our hearts, and as such should be chosen wisely and well, and with much deliberation. They are, if chosen right, the guiding stars which lead us ever onward toward the heights. Each good book, as we read it, stamps its influence upon our character, and makes us better women and men. First and best of all books, and the one on which we lean most heavily for support is the Bible. It is the one book which comforts and uplifts humanity wherever it may dwell. It extends the invitation: "Come unto Me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And mankind has responded and proved the infinite worth thereof. For religious reading Rev. Charles Sheldon's books are excellent. He is the author of many works including: "In His Steps," "The Crucifixion of Philip Strong," "Richard Bruce," "The Miracle at Markham," etc. Probably his most widely read book is "In His Steps." In this he depicts life as it would be if we literally followed the golden rule and loved our neighbor as ourself. Another book which will provide an afternoon's pleasant reading is "Through Ways Unknown." "Ben Hur," written by Lewis Wallace is a splendid portrayal of "Rome's Imperial Day," and is intermingled with much of a religious nature. This book is very dramatic, and one can almost see the chariot race with all its details. Our sympathy is with Esther, the little slave-maiden, and we turn with distrust from the beautiful yet deceitful Egyptian woman.

You will have no regret over placing the Chautauqua series in the hands of your daughters. These books are written especially for girls, and they tend to awaken within us a longing for the ideal in life. The book entitled, "Starred to the Heights," by Dora Farncomb, is worthy a careful reading. Then, of course, we are all more or less familiar with "Shakespeare's Plays", John Ruskin's "Sesame and Lilies," Longfellow's "Evangeline" and "Hiawatha," and rightly value the knowledge to be derived therefrom. Sir Walter Scott's "Waverley Novels" also find a place in all well-stocked libraries. However, we must confess to a special fondness for Charles Dickens' works; his "David Copperfield" is so gripping in human interest. In fact it is supposed to be an autobiography of the author's life. We sympathize with and long to help the little traveller on his weary journey to the home of his aunt. Then we follow him through his career until we leave him an eminent journalist. How brightly the shining character of "Agnes" stands throughout the book, and to know "Dora Spenlow" is to love her. We lay down this book reluctantly and from our library shelves take down another Charles Dickens. This time it is the "Old Curiosity Shop," and we roam with Nell on English meadows and lose our way. We glance over the volumes and find "Bleak House", which takes us well within the law courts and shows us "A Christmas Carol," this has found universal favor and has rekindled the Christmas spirit throughout the length and breadth of Christendom.

"Dombey and Son," oh how we long with little Paul to stop the onrush of the river—And we walk with Florence through weary ways until Walter takes her within the shelter of his love forevermore. Our hearts are filled with good feeling for Capt. Cuttle. Here is "Oliver Twist," this book shows us sin in its blackest garb and the consequences thereof. "Great Expectations." There is one outstanding and compelling character in this book, that of lawyer Mead. But on the whole we think this the most dismal of Dickens' productions. "Tale of Two Cities."—We have here the French revolution before us, that reign of terror of which we almost fear to

read. Charles Darnley is a character that shines brightly throughout the book, and the memory of Lucille's life remains with us as that of a pure and true woman. The scenes are laid in London and in Paris. We have here an example of "No greater love hath a man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."

We will now turn to the shelves whereon are placed Ralph Connor's works. He transports us to the prairie, the granaries of the British Empire, and we learn to know and welcome the stranger "The Foreigner" within our gates. "The Doctor" and "The Prospector" are here also, and "The Man from Glengarry." This book breathes of pioneer life and the hardships coupled therewith. George Elliot's "Mill on the Floss" and Blackmore's "Lorna Doone" are both prominent books because of the good literature which they contain. "The Vicar of Wakefield", by Oliver Goldsmith is a book which must also have a place upon your library shelves. And now we turn with a sense of delicious refreshment to Miss Mulock's "John Halifax, Gentleman." This is a domestic book, one which ushers us within the happy home circle where peace and contentment reign. Here also we find "Little Women" and "Good Wives." We turn back their leaves and make the acquaintance of Jo, with her unconventional ways, homemaker Meg, dainty Amy, and loving Beth, all of whom are very entertaining and instructive characters. And on the library table beside the study lamp, we find Nellie McClung's "Sowing Seeds in Danny" and "The Second Chance" with Miss Montgomery's "Kilmeny of the Orchard." Oh the humor and the pathos of these books. Isobel Ecclestone MacKay's "House of Many Windows" is a charming book, and one which will well repay the reader for the time spent thereon. In the cupboard beside the window seat, we discover volumes and volumes devoted to Nature. "The Call of the Wild," by Jack London, takes us north, ever northward until we reach the gold land, the Klondyke; "Songs of a Sourdough," by Robert Service, tell us also of the great white land. Then here is "The Love of the Wild," by Archie P. McKishnie, in which we learn to know nature as she is; Gilbert White's "Natural History of Selborne," in England, an eighteenth century work, which has become a classic and gives one an idea of what a whole-souled, all-round naturalist is like. This book is in the form of a series of letters to a friend. Naturally there are some views which have since been proved wrong. Here also is a book by Thoreau, "Walden." It is his best-known work. It is a record of life in the woods, an experiment which he undertook by way of demonstrating that our living is altogether too complex and artificial, and lacking in leisure for the higher things of the mind and spirit. The opening chapters of this book are rather heavily weighted with his philosophies and views of living, and there is rather harsh treatment of our customs, religion, etc. Burroughs has also a place here. It is with a feeling of gratitude we turn to Lampman's work, our own Canadian poet. He has taught us to see the landscape with new eyes. Wordsworth classed as a nature poet of true vision, and we have Ernest Thompson-Seton's animal books, "Wild Animals I Have Known," etc. They are rather too fictitious to be regarded as scientifically accurate in every detail. Their value is rather in stimulating our interest in wild life. The Nova Scotian, Charles D. Roberts writes in a somewhat similar vein, bestowing on his animals a good many rather human characteristics. His books are interesting nevertheless. And here is Rudyard Kipling's poem, "Our Lady of the Snows." Our own best country ever is at home. Grant Allen's works, "The Story of a Plant," etc., are included in our list of Nature books. On botany there is Coulter's "Plants." This is quite readable, and is splendidly illustrated. Gray's Manual is here to assist us in identifying plants. Then on birds there is a book by Neltje through weary ways until Walter takes color-key by Chapman, and our O. A. C. has remembered us with "Birds of Ontario in Relation to Agriculture." On insects there are several books by Comstock, Kellogg and others. We find also



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