

OUR YOUNG FOLKS.

AN INFANT PHENOMENON.

One of the most remarkable instances of childish precocity known of late years has recently appeared in Paris. The child, which is French, born in the neighbourhood of Perigneux in October, 1877, and thus little more than three years old, is named Berthe Guillemand. The parents are poor and ignorant vine-dressers, who, struck when she was only eighteen months old by the fact that she had extraordinary intelligence and a prodigious memory, took her to the village school-teacher, and he amused himself by cultivating her astonishing talents. In a year she had made such progress that her parents made up their minds to reap some advantage from it, and brought her to Paris. She knows not only how to read and write, but the four rules of arithmetic, and solves the little problems that are given her without even making a mistake. Moreover, she knows the whole of the first act of "Athalia," which she repeats in her little silvery voice from end to end without missing a line. And finally, one can ask her for whatever piece he chooses from "Il Trovatore," "Rigoletto," "Faust," and "La Juive." She will sing it to him at once in the most accurate fashion imaginable. Nothing could be funnier than to hear her coo out the "Caro nome" from "Rigoletto" in Italian. And yet as we have said, she is but a little over three years old. Not only does she not look older, but her certificate of birth, attested by authorities, proves the fact beyond question.

The child has been carefully examined by physicians for any abnormal development of the brain or skull, but they say that there is nothing of the sort, and that it is simply a very well developed head. Her manager was asked what he intended to do when she was five or six years old, when what is now surprising in her would be no longer extraordinary. "Oh," said he, "I have an engagement with her parents for five years, all the same, and I am quite sure of making a good thing of it. As she grows older, I will make her exercises more complicated. She has just recited to you the first act of 'Athalia.' Now I am going to make her learn it backwards. As soon as she is four years old I am going to begin to have her taught mathematics!" And the baby, playing with an india rubber doll, listened to all this without appearing in the least frightened by a future thus bristling with incomprehensible phrases, and even, perhaps with algebraic formulæ.

This may all be very well for a year, for two years, perhaps for five, but in the end this poor little brain cannot fail of breaking down under such a strain. It simply means meningitis in the more or less remote future.

We have a Society for the prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Why in the world have we not one for childhood as well? Meanwhile, Berthe Guillemand goes on earning a thousand francs a month for her parents, and many more for her impressario, a sort of Italian Barnum named Pessaro.

THE SONG OF CALVARY.

My soul mounts up on eagle's wings
Unto the crystal sea;
And joins the blessed throng that sings
The song of Calvary.

Teach me to sing through all my days
Thy heaven-born melody;
And this shall be my sweetest praise,
The song of Calvary.

The song of God's eternal love,
The song of victory,
To Him who intercedes above,
The Christ of Calvary.

"TEARS AND KISSES."

A writer in the *Sunday School Times* tells a pathetic story of that language of signs which is common all over the world: "Two little Italians accompanied a man with a harp out of the city along the country roads skirted by fields and woods, and here and there was a farm-house by the way.

He played, and they sang at every door. Their voices were sweet, and the words in an unknown tongue.

"Not knowing how to make themselves understood, the little children, when they had finished singing, shyly held out their little brown hands or aprons to get anything that might be given to them, and take it to the dark man out at the gate, who stood ready to receive it.

"One day the dark harpist went to sleep, and the little boy and girl, becoming tired of waiting for him, went off to a cottage under the hill, and began to sing under the window.

"They sang as sweetly as the voices of birds. Presently the blinds were opened wide, and they saw by the window a fair lady on a sick bed regarding them.

"Her eyes shone with a feverish light, and the colour of her cheeks was like a beautiful peach.

"She smiled, and asked them if their feet were not tired. They said a few words in their own tongue.

"She said, 'Are the green fields not better than your city?'

"They shook their heads.

"She asked them, 'Have you a mother?'

"They looked perplexed.

"She said, 'What do you think while you walk along the country roads?'

"They thought she asked for another song, so eager was the face, and they sang at once a song full of sweetness and pity, so sweet that the tears came into her eyes.

"That was the language they had learned: so they sang one sweeter still.

"At this she kissed her hand and waved it to them. Their beautiful faces kindled, and, like a flash, the timid hands waved back a kiss.

"She pointed upward to the sky and sent a kiss thither.

"At this they sank upon their knees and also pointed thither, as much as asking, 'Do you also know the good God?'

"A lady leaning by the window said, 'So tears and kisses belt the earth, and make the whole world kin.' And the sick one added, 'And God is over all.'

SNOW.

There is something really charming in a country house after a great snow-storm, in the sense of snugness that it brings, the tucked-up feeling, as if it were indeed a fleece of wool that compassed us about and kept us warm. In a soft room, lifted above the drifts, forgetful of the real source of heat, we look out upon the white, padded windows, the soft, supine heap, and imagine that it is this that warms and soothes us. A night passes, and the winds blow and beat upon the house, and the "rain into a fleece of wool" has fallen, and made valleys of our mountains and empty spaces of our casements. Snow is beautiful, like some people, in its own place. It holds its birthright high among the immortals. It is spoiled by collision with mundane and artificial things. On the mountains is it not ever beautiful? On the fields, the meadows, the trees, the walls, untouched, it is a living beauty. But in cities, where the masses of human kind must trample it down, push it, crush it, blacken it, mob it, where an armed force with pickaxe and shovel must fall upon it and beat and grind it out of existence, it is an ugliness, a blot, a degraded pearl of great price.

CUNNING OF ANIMALS.

There are authentic cases of simulation or deception which animals have worked out to save themselves from labour, or to procure some advantage. A military surgeon tells of a horse which was accustomed to pretend to be lame on the days which the horses were drilled, in order to avoid that duty. A gentleman mentions a dog which, in the winter, when he found his comrades lying around the fire in such a way as to prevent his getting near to it would make a great noise in the yard; at this the other dogs would run out, while he would slip into the house, and, securing a good place for himself, leave his comrades to bark as long as they pleased. He tried this trick quite often, and always succeeded in it, for the other dogs had not intelligence enough to find it out.

HOW DO YOU KEEP YOUR ROOM?

A look into the chamber of a boy or girl, will give one an idea of what kind of a man or woman he or she will probably become. A boy who keeps his clothes hung up neatly, or a girl whose room is neat always, will be apt to make a successful man or woman. Order and neatness are essential to our comfort as well as that of others about us. A boy who throws down his cap or boots anywhere will never keep his accounts in shape, will do things in a slovenly, careless way and not be long wanted in any position. A girl who does not make her bed until after dinner—and she should always do it herself rather than have a servant do it—and throws her dress or bonnet down on a chair, will make a poor wife in nine cases out of ten. If the world could see how a girl keeps her dressing-room, some unhappy marriages would be saved.

A soft answer turneth away wrath.