

BETWEEN THE CHORES

JOTTINGS BY A RANCHER :: Written for The Western Home Monthly by S. P.

SOUL CULTURE.

"What a wilderness! Od's sake, you canna see naething in this hole!"

The speaker was an old man—older than his years which numbered the full three score and ten. He had lived for a score of years, practically alone, in a shack from which could be seen on all sides a wide expanse of undulating grain and pasture fields. With difficulty he had been induced to pay us a visit, and his first exclamation as he got down from his buggy and looked around was "What a wilderness!" Our lovely and beloved Intervale seemed to those distant-dazed eyes only a hole! Later on he lost patience over our having spent "ower muckle money" on some choice pictures we had brought with us. I attempted to point out that one gets ample returns for any outlay one can afford to make on works of art.

"Pictures!" the old man exclaimed, "what does onybody want wi' pictures? Nana and her colt out there—or yon cattle—that's the kind o' picture I like to see. Ower muckle money, ower muckle money."

"And the river over there?" I suggested, pointing to a graceful bend of the Bow with its fringe of Poplars. "Isn't that a beautiful picture?"

"Oh, ay!" he assented drily. "There's a lot o' fine trout in the river, and when the flood's on you'll get plenty o' firewood and logs."

I decided that my aged friend had left culture out of count when he built his shack and squatted on the prairie. The aesthetic had not been cultivated, and now that his bodily faculties were visibly on the wane he had no reserve of mental resource whence he might draw happiness in his declining years. When "old Andrew" went home that evening I jotted down the substance of our interview as follows:—

The neglect of his inner self is probably man's greatest improvidence. While spending his years in building up a reserve fund for his physical wants he takes no thought what his soul—his inner self—shall eat, or drink, or where-with shall it be clothed. "I do nothing," declared Socrates in his Apol-

ogy, "but go about persuading you all, old and young alike, not to take thought for your persons, or your properties, but first and chiefly to care about the greatest improvement of the soul." Soul-culture is as much a business proposition as horticulture or agriculture. It is not a matter of chance, nor of superior education, nor of exceptionally fortunate circumstances. It is a matter in which an individual helps himself; it is a matter of self-culture. "We can each of us grow a soul if we are willing to pay the price." Soul-culture is somewhat analogous to amateur gardening. The busy city man finds rest and recreation for his leisure hours in cultivating his little garden plot. During the day's task he looks forward to his evening's enjoyment among his plants and he feels refreshed. A similar refreshing influence comes to the toiler with whom soul-culture is a hobby. Drudgery is ennobled; tasks are made pleasant, and the worries of life are borne without fret—that friction that so quickly wears one out. Assuredly the growing of a soul is worth the price to be paid for it, "for this is really the one and the only victorious life. . . . It is the one pursuit which makes life, to its very last day, full of interest. . . . It can survive strength, health, fortune, friends, for by a Divine alchemy it can turn the loss of them all into the aliment of its ever-growing power."

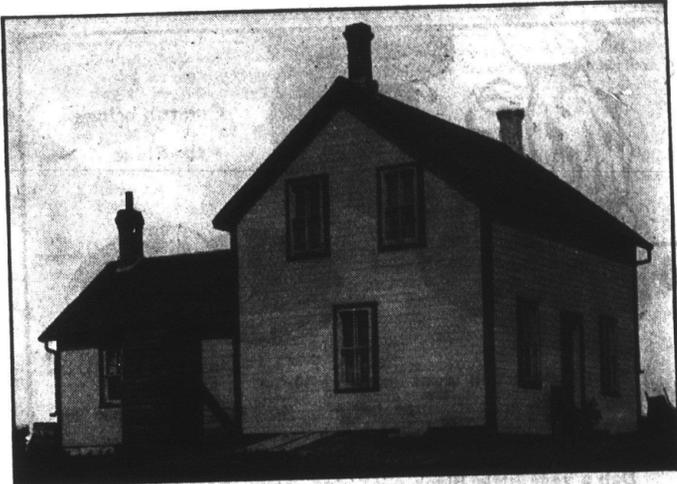
The above quotation is from a delightful book which should be read by every student of soul-culture. It is entitled, "Studies of the soul," by J. Brierly, B.A., and consists of twenty-five short chapters each complete in itself. I read one chapter every Sunday morning at family worship, and I am sure that even the younger members of the family are storing up valuable ideas which will in due time influence their souls' growth. My greatest help, however, is derived from poetry. The poet is the Professor, par excellence of the art of soul-culture. His soul is in sympathy with the mysteries of God's universe, and the poet's life work is to interpret these mysteries in the perfect language of poetry. Get a soul to vibrate in unison with that of

the poet, and growth will go on apace. When a little child lisps, "Twinkle, twinkle, little star, how I wonder what you are," a beginning has been made, and parent and teacher have to see that progress is not retarded.

Since jotting down the above it has been my good fortune to be a "passer-by," and enjoy the hospitality of a bachelor rancher. In this rosy month of June I was "help up" twelve miles from home by a storm of thunder and lightning and rain and snow and sleet, which raged incessantly for nearly thirty hours. It goes without saying that I was made welcome to food and

retired for the night I felt glad that I had been storm-stayed in this log-cabin.

My host was up early next morning, and had breakfast ready and the floor swept by the time I was dressed. He went about his household duties in a methodical and cheerful manner. It was too stormy for outdoor work, so when his chores were done he uncovered his organ and began to play. He played Cleveland's march, then Grant's, with all the ease and precision of a professional. He then sang a song or two, and finished up with a few of Sankey and Moody's hymns.



FARM HOME OF WM. WALDIE, NEAR CARTWRIGHT, MAN.

shelter in that lonely log-cabin among the hills. I expected as much; but I did not expect to find, as I did, culture—yes, unmistakable culture—in juxtaposition with the toil and drudgery of rural life. I felt inclined, like Archimedes of old, to rush out and exclaim "Eureka, I have found it out," only it was raining in a torrent, and there was no one outside to hear me. After supper our conversation turned to poetry. When he had dried his last dish and hung the wash-up on the wall, he brought to me a volume of literary extracts and asked me to read to him Tam o' Shanter.

"My father," he said, "used to read Burns to us; and I should like to hear you read this piece."

In his turn he read to me some verses I had not heard before, and when I

I was literally thunderstruck—astonished. Here was the realization to some extent of my ideal bucolic life. Here was a young Canadian Rancher living a simple but cultured life. From his organ he went back again to the humble duties that his bachelor condition compelled him to perform; happy, for his soul had had its feast; contented, for his task had been raised by culture out of the level of drudgery.

Of course when I speak of poetry, I mean poetry—not merely verse, or worse.

"I put my hat upon my head,
And walked down the Strand,
And there I met another man,
Whose hat was in his hand."

There you have rhyme and rhythm—but nothing more. It is a common mistake to consider poetry the antithesis to prose. There is as much true poetry in prose form as in verse form. The student, therefore, of soul-culture accepts my theory and begins to cultivate the poetic spirit must be careful to get hold of the true poets and not merely versifiers. What command of true pleasure, what a fountain of sound education does the love of poetry provide! Youth is animated and old age sustained by it. No work is interrupted by it, but drudgery is eliminated, and one finds thereby "sermons in stones, books in the running brooks, and good in everything."

A Noted Grape Vine.

The celebrated grape vine in the conservatory at Hampton Court, England, planted in 1769, had in 1890 a stem 13 inches in girth and a principal branch 114 feet in length. The whole vine occupying more than 160 square yards; and in one year it produced 2,200 bunches of fruit weighing on an average a pound—in all about a ton of fruit.

Dar's always er race problum 'bout Chris'mus times, an' dat's 'tween de little niggers ter see which un kin git ter de big house de quicke' ter ketch de white chillun Chris'mus gif.

Bobby—"Say mamma, what are you going to give me for Christmas?"
Mamma—"Oh, anything to keep you quiet, Bobby."
Bobby—"Well, no-thing will keep me quiet, but a drum."



FRIEN AND HIS RAFTS OF LUMBER, SHINGLES, ETC., JUST STARTING FOR "BARR" COLONY, BY BATTLE RIVER.