

Literature for Children.

BY MISS EMILY R. CHRISTIE.

This is emphatically the children's age. The rigid bands which have bound children to decorum in the past have dwindled to a mere thread, which snaps under every restive movement. Today many things are subservient to their wish; household arrangements are made to suit their pleasure and convenience; when they are present conversation is simplified to suit their level. Every year toys are becoming more elaborate, and writers are vying with each other in providing stories for their amusement, until such numbers of fairy tales, hero legends and histories are being re-written and simplified for children that we are overwhelmed by the flood of juvenile literature.

When the child, a seed from the Creator, comes to us in his tiny human casing, his mind is so open to impressions that his whole later life is dependent on the influences of his childhood. His imagination is strong. He sees historical characters breathe and move before him; his ready sympathy is aroused by their impressions and motives; he feels the mystic associations of the wonderful series of events connected with the old Patriarchs, the keen-eyed Greek, the haughty Roman, the watchful Jew, the war-like Goth, the repulsive Hun and the sturdy Teuton.

If this be true, and the child's mind be not only alive to new impressions, but his imagination ready to furnish the proper associations, the literature that he is permitted to read becomes one of the most important elements in his education.

From his earliest years he should be brought into contact with the material and form of genuine literature, literature that means something; not necessarily Homer or Dante, or Shakespeare, but the nursery rhymes, the fairy tales and myths that are part of the inheritance of the race. What delight the babies take in the metaphorical circus tent of Mother Goose Melodies, with its Punch and Judy-like characters. It is to them a radiant fairy-land, an enchanted wonder-making domain. What a medley of nonsense they all make! and yet it must be a sad child, and a rare child, who can go through life without feeling their hypnotic spell.

With Mother Goose comes the fairy tale, full of poetic narrations and fancies, appealing directly to the young judgment as to the right or wrong, the wisdom or folly of the acts recounted. All our great "world stories"—myth, tradition, epic and fairy tale—are of use to children; not merely because of their direct teaching, but because of their formative influence on life, in arousing an interest in the vast story-life of the world, and above all in awakening the young human being into the widest human sympathy and usefulness. This new recognition of the value to childhood of what we call the "world literature" is one of the most practical manifestations of that phase of modern educational thought known as the "brotherhood of man."

That good taste is innate in every child's nature needs no further proof than the fact that much of our finest literature, ancient and modern, the work that stirs the hearts and minds of men and women, is curiously acceptable to children. They have come to be regarded as the special proprietors of such books as "Robinson Crusoe," "Don Quixote" and "The Arabian Nights," books originally written for grown persons.

With what breathless interest the boy reads these matchless tales! How he revels in the magic spirit of the Orient! What a revelation he gets of the richness of human aspirations! What realms of fresh delight for him in "Swiss Family Robinson," "Gulliver's Travels," "Tales from Shakespeare" and the many historic volumes of Henty. What a tonic in the breezy out-of-door books of Stevenson and Kipling! and what mental and moral invigoration in "Pilgrim's Progress" and "Uncle Tom's Cabin." These are certainly far better mental pabulum than the waste of printed commonplace, called juvenile literature, whose chief merit is its harmlessness.

Children naturally delight in rhythmic movement. Stories do not cling in their minds like verses. While they love the dear old favorites "Jack and the Beanstalk," "Cinderella" and the rest, it is the rhymes they remember word for word. Few, proportionately, are the children who have been brought up on Longfellow, Tennyson or Shakespeare, yet who would not gladly exchange the jingling rhymes of Mother Goose for "The Rain in Summer," "The Bridge," "Hiawatha," Whittier's "Barefoot Boy," Tennyson's "Sea Fairies" or snatches from the "Odyssey" and "Iliad." Children love the swift mighty action of heroic verse. Childhood is the poetic age, and yet today children are being cheated out of an early entrance into the world of poetry. They are learning the songs of masters in the high-school instead of the nursery. They are missing the best of moral teachers.

"Children," wrote Sir Walter Scott, "derive impulses of a powerful and important nature from hearing things that they cannot entirely comprehend. It is a mistake

*An Essay delivered on graduating at Acadia Seminary June 5th, 1898.

to write down to their understanding, set them on the scent and let them puzzle it out." The practical outcome of this theory is seen in the lives of many famous men. The treasured books of Scott's childhood were "Josephus," Pope's translation of the "Iliad," some odd volumes of Shakespeare and a copy of Spencer's "Fairy Queen." Pope said until he was twelve, Waller, Spencer and Dryden were his favorite poets, and Macaulay surely learned from his beloved Ætoid the art of presenting a dubious statement with all the vigorous coloring of truth.

Today children are buried in "Elsie Books," "Bessie Books," "Daisy Books," "Lily Books," Miss Netherell's Books and the thousand and one such stories, which are not only useless in awakening the imagination and stimulating the mental growth, but they destroy a child's taste for the true and beautiful in literary art.

While most parents permit their children to read book after book of this character without giving the matter a second thought, many of them are very doubtful about the propriety of newspaper reading. But if a child's mind has not become warped by the books he has read, surely newspaper reading will do him no harm, and in many ways will be a great help to him. The newspaper is the history of today; it increases a child's knowledge of the present and of the past; it gives him an opportunity of studying philanthropic and economic questions by watching disinterestedly the conflicts of labor and capital. Nor should children's magazines be neglected, "The Youth's Companion," "St. Nicholas" and the Girl's and Boy's Own Annuals are helpful in every home.

Of late years much fine literature has been provided especially for children. The names of Kate Douglas Wiggin, Francis Hodgson Burnett and Laura Richards stand prominently among those who have delighted children as well as older persons with their charming stories. "The Bird's Christmas Carol," has enchanted thousands with its touching pathos and the inimitable humor of the "Ruggleses in the Backyard," "Little Lord Fauntleroy" and "Editha's Burglar" have touched the hearts of the world with their sweet idealism. "Captain January" and "Melodie" have shown in a new light the great influence of pure, sweet child life.

But it is not in the realm of prose alone that stories are being provided for children. Eugene Field and Whitcomb Riley are certainly deserving of the title children's poets. Of all the American writers Eugene Field best understood the heart of a child. There was in his nature a genuine childlike element, great simplicity, affection and tenderness; these are the qualities that which make him so interesting to children and children so interesting to him. His verses are filled with the little every-day things in every child's life, their toys and experiences.

Whitcomb Riley's poems are the true records of life as he has seen it.

"Tell of this 's just like they is,
They don't need no excuse,
Don't tech 'em up as the poets does,
Till they're all too fine for us."

He loves both things and people, "just like they is." Whether it be "Little Orphan Annie" and her fascinated and frightened charges, or "The Good Old Nighbors at Griggby's Station," "where we used to be so happy and so pure." On every side he touches life with a tender and comprehending sympathy.

With such masses of juvenile literature flooding our markets, the chief danger is that children will read nothing well, but they should be led into a faithful friendship for a few good books; for it is not the many books he reads but the few old friends that he has read until they have become a part of his thinking self, that most influence life and character. Let children make their firmest friendships with those books, which lead them back to their birthright, the keen glow and refreshment of deep draughts from the "well of English undefiled." So from their earliest years will they be brought into contact with a literature, the magic of whose art, has been described, as "conferring on each period of life its appropriate blessing, on youth, experience, on maturity, calm, on age, youthfulness, as being a source of animation to friends when they meet; and able to sweeten solitude itself with best society, with the companionship of the wise and the good, with the beauty which the eye cannot see and the music heard only in silence."

Tidings From Afar.

THE WEATHER.

The horror of the great heat that is characteristic of an Indian May is something that we have not yet experienced this year. For a few weeks the mercury lingered night and day in the neighborhood of ninety, sometimes falling to 85 and sometimes running up to 95. But since then we have had strange freaks in the line of weather. Heavy rains that seem almost like monsoon storms have come, and the air has often seemed as cool as we might naturally expect it to be two or three months hence. We are delighted, of course, to escape the great heat that so often at this time of the year seems to scorch one even to the marrow of the bones. But there is a serious aspect to this delightful let-up. We may be getting rain that is not needed now, and may not get it later on

when it is imperative for the life of the crops. The Hindu Astrologers have predicted that this, the last year of the 5000 cycle of the Kali Yuga (Dark Age) is to be eventful in its dire calamities. Among other things they say that rain will come in the hot season, and later on will fall, leaving the crops to perish. The last few weeks seem to show that the first part of their prophecy is coming remarkably true. But since "God's in his heaven all's well with the world," I hardly think we shall forebode evil. We shall take this cool hot season and be thankful for it, while we trust Him for the future.

SAVARA BAPTISMS.

Last Sunday we had three candidates for baptism. They were all Savaras. Two of them gave good evidence of being born again and were received. The third owing to his not being very well, and probably to his feeling not quite courageous enough, suggested that his examination be put off till next week. He said he was trusting in Jesus and believed that He had forgiven him. It was his determination, he said, to come next Sunday for baptism. The names of those baptized were S. Tummiah, a lad of fourteen, and S. Soogootama, a young woman of about sixteen. (Just here let me say that in Indian names the initial letter indicates not the Christian name, as with us, but the family name. We would say Mr. P. (Paul) Smith. They would say Mr. S. (Smith) Paul.) The Savaras are coming to Christ. Lately Bro. S. Goomana, of whom we have written, as having once been in mission employ, but more recently an emigrant agent, has decided to seek the salvation of his fellow Savaras, and has been employed by the Board. He and Bro. Papiah are now at work. Who will come out as a missionary to this interesting hill tribe? Dare we leave them without the Gospel? It is in many respects a most inviting field. There will be some hardships peculiar to that locality. It is more feverish than the plains. But possibly one would soon become acclimated and would not suffer so much from fever as those who go up, for an occasional tour, from the lower level. Travelling would be somewhat more tedious, but the scenery is magnificent. The fact is we must count upon having hardships in this land wherever we locate. But one could not wish a more promising field than this same Savara country. Harvests await the reapers who shall locate among this simple-minded, but independent people.

By the way in a letter that I wrote to Sec'y Manning reference was made to the fact that none of us now upon the field seem fitted for this Savara work. I believe any of us would gladly undertake it if we felt called to it, if we felt that we were the ones whom God could use to the best advantage there. I referred to the fact that Bro. Corey was not a linguist. I hope this remark will not make a false impression. Bro. Corey has mastered the Telugu and uses it well. But he does not feel that the acquisition of languages is his forte, and he feels that he will need all his time and energy to make himself proficient and prosecute his work in the one tongue. Bro. Hardy very generously offered to take up this work if it was thought best. But he too will probably find the Telugu sufficiently difficult to tax his best energies. We want you to understand that we are not shirking a hard post. We trust that some young man who has a rugged constitution himself, and a wife who is also rugged, and who has some special aptitude in the acquisition of languages, may be found to volunteer for this promising work.

OUR NEW RAILWAY.

The Parlakimedi Light Railway which starts at Nowpada Station on the East Coast Railway, four miles from here, and runs through our town, is nearing completion. The rails are being laid and before the end of the month we hope to see the engines puffing past our compound. Even India is moving ahead in many respects. So far as these new railways are concerned we are full of joy over the prospects for easier means of travel than in the former days. It is said that a large syndicate has been formed in England to extend this Kimeri road. Many of you have our Mission Map. Please follow me as I indicate where the line is supposed to run. Start at Nowpada East of Tekkali, and follow this new line into Tekkali. From here, through Timbur, to Parlakimedi. Thence to Heremandalam, on to Palkonda, and from that town to a place called Parvatipur. At that point it touches another line of railway which has been surveyed from Vizianagram, through Bobbili, to Parvatipur and away on to Raipur, west of the territory marked upon our map. This Kimeri road will touch that road at Parvatipur, then turn about and pass down through Rajam (one of Bro. Churchill's outstations.) Thence it strikes across the East Coast Line, to Chicacole, and then to Calingapatam on the sea-coast. From that point it turns north till it reaches the point from which we started. If this railway scheme is carried out our mission field will be most marvellously and beautifully intersected with rails for the purpose of intercommunication. Possibly within five years all this may become a reality. Let us hope so.

THE SECRET OF SUCCESS.

But we are learning more and more that neither railways, nor schools, nor new and patent methods, etc., etc,

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