

HOME JOURNAL

Life, Literature and Education

IN THE WORLD OF LITERATURE AND ART.

Maurice Grau, the operatic impresario, died in France. He was the manager for many of the famous artists since 1872, including Sarah Bernhardt, Irving and Terry, Patti, Rubenstein and Salvini.

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A fifteen-year-old Russian violinist, Mischa Elman, has aroused great enthusiasm in musical circles in London, Paris and Berlin. He will visit America next fall.

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Lord Curzon, ex-viceroy of India, has been elected Chancellor of Oxford University by a vote of 1,111 against 439 cast for Lord Rosebery.

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Englemere Lodge, near Ascot, the residence of Sir William Miller, was burned, together with its contents, including many thousands of pounds worth of art treasures. Among the paintings destroyed were Zauchero's portrait of Mary Queen of Scots, valued at £2,000, and three Titians. Some priceless china and ancient Persian carpets were lost.

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Sir Charles Tupper was presented with a splendid portrait of himself. The occasion was the fortieth anniversary of the conference of which he was a member, which resulted in the confederation of Canada. Lord Strathcona made the presentation.

THE FARMER AND THE SEASONS.

There is a belief abroad in the world that the seasons are common property. This is a mistake. To the average city man, woman and child spring is not a season whose coming is worthy of celebration, but merely the accepted time for letting out the furnace fire, buying new clothes, and bringing out last year's marbles and skipping ropes. Summer is the season in which it is customary to have holidays or to grumble at having to work during the heat. Autumn means increased activity in the office, picking and preserving in the kitchen and the re-opening of school. Winter has Christmas in it to help keep it in remembrance—also skating and coal bills. "God made the country and man made the town" is an old saying and in the man-made town time is reckoned by the artificial divisions of pay-day and changes of raiment.

But beyond the pavements and electric lights time is marked in the way God marked it—springtime and harvest, summer and winter. Spring is really spring to the farmer, for all around him the message is written in language he cannot mistake—in the tender blades of the grass, the budding of trees, the gurgling of brooks, and the mating song of the birds. He sees the hard kernels of the grain he sowed transformed into strong green blades, promise of the full corn in the ear which is to come. There is nothing else like it in the whole year to the man whose work is out of doors. All his tasks are particularly suited to the budding life around him. He and nature are companions in labor.

When the sun grows stronger and the sky bluer as summer draws on he is living among the living things that are developing in response to the grateful heat; and in the autumn harvest he gathers of the ripened grain—the fruit of his labors and the kindly offices of the seasons. He has worked hand in hand with nature, guided by her laws and aided by her wisdom, and with the feeling of a year's work well done he sees winter lay a warm white blanket over the soil to protect it during its period of rest.

Easter-tide comes to the man on the land with special significance. If he cannot altogether solve its mystery, he can yet understand it to an extent denied to men of other occupations. He

has seen the miracle of the resurrection in miniature year after year. He has seen the withered grass and the faded flower, so long buried in a snowy grave, rise to newness of life out of the darkness of death. He has cast the grain into the ground, there to decay; yet there is within him the sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection, when later on the earth will render back to him thirty, sixty, or even a hundred fold. Everything at this season speaks to him of new life and hope in the world about him, and assures him that man must have some part in the great scheme of renewal—a new life in which to reproduce and perfect the good of this and from which the evil will be dropped.

A SCHOOL GARDEN.

When nature-study and agriculture were first placed on the school curriculum the majority of the teachers were panic stricken; and well they might be, for their own ignorance of these subjects was monumental and colossal. Many of them had lived all their lives in the city, and had the haziest ideas about the world of nature beyond the pavements. For years the teaching of agriculture and nature-study was indefinite and disconnected simply because the instructors did not know what they were teaching and had to feel their way along, hoping that no misguided child would be inspired to ask any questions to render it necessary to go below the surface over which they were so cautiously skimming.

The teachers were not to blame. They had never had any instruction themselves along these lines. They began to read up for their own information; the training schools devoted time to the course, and during the last three or four years great improvement has taken place. It is no longer a case of the blind leading the blind. But there is room for growth yet, and it can be found in the way of the school garden. It should be possible for every school to have one proportioned in size to the number of pupils in attendance, but large enough to give every child a plot at least six feet by twelve for his very own. There are drawbacks of course—constantly changing teachers, unsympathetic trustees, the mid-summer vacation, but none of these should prove insuperable obstacles in the face of determination. The schools which open in March or April and remain open all summer would not be troubled by the last-named hindrance. The others could plan their gardens so as to raise those flowers and vegetables maturing early in the season.

A teacher is often led to change positions not to get an increased salary, but in the hope that some other school may be less dull and the life less monotonous than where she is. It is hard to interest the children—too hard to make it worth while. But if in the school grounds there were a patch of soil from which teacher and pupil could learn by seeing with their own eyes the wonderful work of sunshine and rain, the action of frost and dew, the sprouting of a seed and the budding of a leaf, the rapid growth of weeds, the ravages of insect pests and the kindly offices of the birds, they could not help being interested and instructed in a way book knowledge could never attain.

Out of a whole school district some one could surely be found to plow and harrow the small space, thus "acquiring merit" for helping to make education more educative and attractive to the future citizens of the locality. A few cents from each child and the teacher would purchase enough seeds for the first experiment, and the children could gather and preserve the seeds from the plants as they ripened and use them another season. The whole experiment, in fact, is anything but a costly one, and is well worth trying.

READING ALOUD,

Reading aloud is almost a lost art. Especially is this true in town and city homes, where books and magazines are sufficiently plentiful to allow one to each member of the family, and where an evening unbroken by incoming or outgoing is a rarity. In the country more can be done to preserve it, for there are many evenings when the whole family gathers round the evening lamp and guests are absent.

The benefits so be derived from reading aloud are manifold. Like mercy "it blesses him that gives and him that takes." In the first place, added to the enjoyment to be derived from the book itself is the pleasure of sharing it with another at the same time. Beautiful music, magnificent scenery, a good book and even a good meal lack something when one has to take them alone.

There is a great temptation when reading inaudibly to slip over new words. The tendency is to give a hasty glance at the context for the meaning and trust altogether to the eye for the pronunciation. But when one is reading aloud a strange word is an obstacle not to be avoided, but conquered with the help of discussion and the dictionary. Thus the reader and hearers add to their working every-day vocabulary many words that can be used, or at least can be recognized when they meet again. A recent convention decided to expunge certain things from their agenda in future. That staggered one hearer, and because another spoke of it they looked it up. Probably neither of them will make much use of "expunge from the agenda" in their conversation, but if any one else uses it they will know what he is talking about.

Some curious one of the group will persist in asking questions that will necessitate recourse to geographies, gazetteers, books of history and mythology. The reader will have to read with the understanding as well as the eyes and lips while the hearer will get the author's idea plus the reader's interpretation of it, and a chance to dispute the latter.

The same person should not always do the reading, even if he does it more satisfactorily than the others of the family. Each should have his share in the benefits as well as the responsibilities. Books of simple text can be chosen for the younger members to read aloud, and great encouragement and forbearance shown when they make mistakes. It helps to banish that self-consciousness which is the bane of children who have reached the awkward age.

VENTILATE THE HOUSE.

Farmers and stock raisers are devoting attention to the subject of the ventilation of their stock-barns and stables, in the hope of preventing, if not eradicating tuberculosis among their animals. Of greater import is the consideration of the proper ventilation of the farm home, and the attention paid to it is incredibly small. The first houses built by the early settlers, (and many of the homes of the new comers of the present day) possessed an abundance of discomforts, but one thing the occupant had willy-nilly, was any amount of pure air—sometimes too cold, sometimes too hot, but always pure, entering through chinks and cracks or brought in through the agency of wide chimneys and open fire-places.

But prosperity brings in its train some things that are not blessings. When the new house was built every effort was made to build a solid structure that would defy the elements. All the illegitimate entrances were closed up, walls were of brick, floors of matched lumber; carefully shingled roofs and tight-fitting windows, and no legitimate openings for securing fresh and expelling stale air were provided. There are hundreds of good new houses throughout the West with absolutely no means of ventilation except by the windows, and they freeze down early in the winter and are left closed until spring. No wonder consumption is increasing when men and women are breathing the same old air for days at a time. Barns and stables should be ventilated, but so should houses. A human being is of as much importance as a dairy cow.