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Jan., 1885.

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We would direct the attention of our readers to the advertisement of that splendid agricultural monthly the *Farmer's Advocate*.

Our Own Fireside for 1885.

The success that has attended this journal during the year now closing, plainly indicates that it meets a popular want in Canadian journalism.

Fresh improvements and attractions will be added during 1885.

A well-conducted Educational page will be maintained throughout the year. Correspondence from members of the profession on timely topics is invited.

The publishing of carefully written and reliable memoirs of men of note, with portrait, will be continued throughout the new year.

The "Art Pictorial" will also be utilized in the printing of attractive sketches of one character and another from time to time.

At least once every three months, a large four-page supplement, brimful of useful information, will be published with OUR OWN FIRESIDE.

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Nothing contributes more certainly to the animal spirits than benevolence. Servants and common people are always about you; make moderate attempts to please everybody and the effort will insensibly lead you to a more happy state of mind. Pleasure is very reflective, and if you give it you will feel it. The pleasure you give by kindness of manner returns to you, and often with compound interest. The receipt for cheerfulness is not to have one motive only in the day for living, but a number of little motives; a man who from the time he rises till bedtime conducts himself like a gentleman, who throws some little condescension into his manner to inferiors, and who is always contriving to soften the distance between himself and the poor and ignorant, is always improving his animal spirits, and adding to his happiness. I recommend lights as a great improver of animal spirits. How is it possible to be happy with two tallow candles ill snuffed? You may be virtuous and wise and good, but two candles will not do for animal spirits. Every night the room in which I sit is lighted up like a town after a great naval victory, and in this serene galaxy, and with a blazing fire, it is scarcely possible to be low-spirited, a thousand pleasing images spring up in the mind, and I can see the little blue demons scampering off like parish boys pursued by the beadle.—[SYDNEY SMITH.

In connection with the large four page supplement to this issue of OUR OWN FIRESIDE will be found a carefully compiled catalogue of Educational Works. Teachers are asked to note the special advantages gained in dealing direct with the Teachers' Book Room.

Why Birds Sing.

The majority of ornithologists agree in ascribing an erotic character to the songs of birds; not only the melting melodies, but also those of their tones that are discordant to the human ear, are regarded as love-notes. Darwin finally, saving some reserves, came to accept this view. To be able to speak critically of the love-song, one should pay especial regard to the love-life of birds. It would be to throw water into the sea to add to what ornithological writers have advanced concerning the exceeding vital worth and cosmical significance of love. Nevertheless, I venture the opinion that the origin of the song-habit is to be found in other sources as well as in this important factor, among which is the joy of life, manifested in an irresistible determination to announce itself in melody; and that the song is more perfectly brought out in proportion as this feeling is more highly developed in the organization. Birds in freedom begin to sing long before pairing, and continue it, subject to interruptions, long afterward, though all passion has been extinguished; and domesticated birds sing through the whole year without regard to breeding-time, though no female or companion ever be in sight. Such birds, born in captivity, never feel the loss of freedom, and, if they are well taken care of, are always hearty and in good spirits. The bird sings, to a large extent, for his own pleasure: for he frequently lets himself out lustily when he knows he is all alone. In the spring-time of love, when all life is invigorated, and the effort to win a mate, by ardent wooing is crowned with the joy of triumph, the song reaches its highest perfection. But the male bird also sings to entertain his mate during the arduous nest building and hatching, to cheer the young, and, if he be a domesticated bird, to give pleasure to his lord and the providence that takes care of him, and in doing so to please himself. Lastly, the bird sings—by habit, as we call it—because the tendency is innate in the organs of song to exercise themselves.—DR. FLACZK, in *Popular Science Monthly* for February.

The History of Zero.

Zero on the common thermometer, like the fanciful names of the constellations, is an instance of the way wise men's errors are made immortal by becoming popular. Zero comes to us through Spanish from the Arabic, and means empty, hence nothing. In an expression like "60 degrees Fahr.," the abbreviation Fahr. stands for Fahrenheit, a Prussian merchant, of Dantzic, on the shores of the Baltic Sea.

His full name was Gabriel Daniel Fahrenheit. From a boy he was a close observer of nature, and when only 19 years of age, in the remarkably cold winter of 1700, he experimented by putting snow and salt together, and noticed that it produced a degree of cold equal to the coldest day of that year. As that day was the coldest the oldest inhabitant could remember, Gabriel was more struck with the coincidence of his little scientific discovery, and hastily concluded he had discovered the lowest degree of temperature known to the world, either natural or scientific. He called that degree zero, and constructed a thermometer, or rude weather-glass, with a scale graduated up from the zero to the boiling point, which he numbered 212, and the freezing point, 82, because, as he thought, mercury contracted the thirty-second of its volume on being cooled down from the temperature of freezing water to zero, and expanded the one hundred and eightieth on being heated from the freezing to the boiling point.

Time showed that this arrangement, instead of being truly scientific, was as arbitrary as the division of the Bible into verses and chapters, and that these two points no more represented the real extremes of temperature than from "Dan to Beersheba" expressed the exact extremes of Palestine. But Fahrenheit's thermometer had been widely adopted with its own inconvenient scale, and none thought of any better until his name became an authority, for Fahrenheit finally abandoned trade and gave himself up to science. This habit made people cling to the established scale, as habit makes the English cling to the old system of cumbersome, fractional money. Our nation began to use Fahrenheit's thermometer about the middle of the last century, or not far from the time when old style was exchanged for the new style in the writing of dates.

The three countries which use Fahrenheit are Holland, England, and America; Russia and Germany use Reaumur's thermometer, in which the boiling point is 180 degrees above freezing point. France uses the Centigrade thermometer, so marked because it calls the boiling point 100 degrees from freezing point. On many accounts the Centigrade system is the best, and the triumph of convenience will be attained when zero is made the freezing point, and when the boiling point is made 100 or 1,000 degrees from it, and all the subdivisions are fixed decimally. If Fahrenheit had done this at first, or if he had made it one of his many improvements after the public adopted his error, the luck of opportunity, which was really his, would have secured to his invention the patronage of the world.

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