

Literature Music Art

CURRENT TOPICS

A very interesting publication comes to us in the shape of a report from the superintendent of neglected children, Winnipeg, in which we are told how the problem of looking after the little waifs and strays of some of the large cities has been worked out. Happily for us in the West of Canada, there is no such grave state of affairs in this respect as exists in other older and more settled communities. It rests with us to see that our country remains free from this blot upon civilization, this condition of things that is responsible for neglected children. The welfare of the little ones is after all the thing that is closest to our hearts. There is not one among us, taking individually, who would not do all in his power to help along any work that tends to bring enlightenment and happiness to the children, who are the source of the most of our own enlightenment and happiness. There is not one among us who would not exert every energy to avert conditions which must entail suffering upon these tender little dependents.

In the light afforded us by past history, and present example there would be no excuse for us if we allowed ourselves to make the same mistakes as other countries have made. The hope of the British nation lies in her colonies, and the greatest of those of Canada, and the greatest province of Canada, greatest, because it is richest in opportunities and possibilities, is British Columbia. Let us see to it, as citizens of this province that we, in no wise, shirk our responsibilities, that we give fair play to every man and every woman, and particularly to every child. For if in the hope of the nation in the colonies, then it is in the hands of the children of today who will be the men and women of tomorrow, and who shall make of the future just what you and I have taught them to make of today. If we have done little and gone backward instead of forward, better things shall not come to pass; but if we have done our best and worked our hardest as I believe we all are doing, then we have indeed sown the seeds of a glorious harvest.

One fact particularly seems to be borne out by the study of various statistics and various causes relating to the deterioration among the poor class of children, and that is that no woman while rearing a family should be obliged to do any work outside her own domestic duties. There are not many cases of this kind brought under the notice of us in British Columbia, but I shall recall one instance a short time ago of a woman who came to do the washing in a large family. She was a married woman and very emaciated, and her face lined, when she said she was only 35, it was difficult to believe her. She looked nearly 50. One day she failed to come at the appointed time, and word was brought that she was ill. She had been working out six days in the week and had broken down under the strain. Her husband was a machinist and the machinists had been on strike a year, and she had been supporting the family. Keeping the children at school, and looking forward all week to Sunday when she did her own scrubbing and washing and baking. "And yet," as she said to her employer one day with irony, "they call us women the weaker sex; why my G— we has to be men and women both." Her words would have found an echo doubtless in many an old countrywoman's heart.

Now for a few statistics. "Married women in the West Riding of Yorkshire," says Miss Jones, "in addition to bearing the children and caring for the home are often expected partially, and sometimes wholly, to support their family. In a number of cases which have come under our notice the wives work all day in the mill and on their return tidy the home, baking and washing for the family. Many do not retire till midnight, rising again early to make some preparation for a mid-day meal before going to work. In the dinner hour they prepare the meal, serve husband and children, swallowing down food too hurriedly, and again hasten back to their duties. Their lives often appear to be little better than those of slaves, and many at 45 are broken-down women, prematurely aged."

Mr. Booth, in his great work on the poor of London, states: "The lowest class there consists of 11,000 people," whom he styles "hopeless, helpless city savages. Their life is the life of savages with the same extremes of hardships and occasional excess. It is not easy to say how they live. They render no useful service, they create no wealth, more often they destroy it." He estimates the number of persons living in poverty in London at 30 per cent. This does not include those living in workhouses, etc.

According to the latest available data gathered from official reports and publications of the United States we learn:

"In prosperous years not less than ten million persons are living in poverty, that is, to say, in an underfed, underclad and poorly housed condition.

"About 4,000 are public paupers.

"Two thousand workmen are unemployed from four to six months in the year.

"About 500,000 male immigrants arrive yearly and seek work in the very districts where unemployment is greatest.

"Over 1,700,000 little children are forced to become wage-earners when they should still be in school.

"About 2,000,000 women are employed in factories and mills.

"About 1,000,000 workers are killed or injured each year while engaged in their work, and about 10,000,000 people will, if the present ratio is kept up, die in the near future of preventable disease."

Speaking of crime in the United States one well known writer states: "That if three-quarters of the annual crop of crime there could be nipped in the bud it would save the country the staggering amount of \$450,000,000 per annum."

It is hard to believe, but it is nevertheless a fact that on February 13, 1908, there were in the City of New York, 101,277 absolutely windowless rooms, most of them bedrooms, inhabited by the poorer classes—those who pay rent of \$3.00 to \$10 per month.

Is this not cruellest incongruity.

"Cruelty to children! You read in all the Sunday papers that story of a wealthy woman who owns a home and a vacant lot on Fifth avenue. Of course we shall not tell her name. But the vacant lot worth \$650,000, is used as a playground by a noble dog, who wears a silk cloak which cost \$50 and a jeweled collar worth \$1,500; rubber boots, fur-lines, to protect his poor feet. And an attendant sees to it the priceless animal's wants are filled as soon as expressed. Take a walk some day through the narrow streets of the East side. Watch the wretched little creatures who are the children of the common, vulgar people who work for a living. Their cotton cloaks may have cost 30 cents when they were new. Their playground is the public street and it costs them nothing, except of course, when a trolley car or a wagon runs over them, and then it costs them their lives. And do you know that a Brooklyn judge granted an indemnity of one dollar to a bereaved father whose child had been killed by a car?

And do you know what these children eat? Do you know how many practically subsist on the free breakfast given to school children by some philanthropic bakers of the East side? Do you know where they sleep? On a pile of rags or garments their father and mother have been sewing on. During summer they spend their nights on roofs or fire escapes.

No nation can rise higher than the highest type of home in that nation. Protect the home and you safeguard the child, safeguard the child, mentally, morally and physically and you insure the future welfare of the State. And the State built upon the solid rock of these conditions will endure all the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune," and all the storms and tribulation of the ages.

All this may appear very obvious, but when we consider what child neglect exists in other countries, does it not seem as if the value of the child is a modern discovery.

We need not turn the page of history back very far to arrive at the period when the United States occupied a position analogous to our own today. She offered work in abundance, and a home and assured future to every industrious man and woman coming to her shores. She could draw upon the wisdom of the older countries of Europe garnered slowly and by infinite toil and trouble. She had to deal with the same problem that confronts us, that of assimilating and welding together a number of peoples differing in ideals, languages and nationality. How she succeeded in this problem is a matter of history; one thing stands out very, very plainly, she did not, until very recent years, properly protect the interests of her juvenile population. She, too, like England and many another country, is reaping the harvest grown from the seeds of child neglect. A harvest of crime, pauperism, suffering and disease. A harvest which it is safe to say, if proper precautions had been taken at the proper time, could be reduced by at least 50 per cent.

We all know that recently there has been a Juvenile court established in British Columbia which is something we can congratulate ourselves upon. It is satisfactory to note that nearly every province in the dominion has or is preparing for a similar institution. The good results that these courts are the means of bringing about are far beyond estimation.

But perhaps more beneficial than any other method of helping the little ones is the establishment of playgrounds where they can be happy and care-free. Sunshine and fresh air are more necessary than the inculcation of moral precepts. Indeed the more there is of the former, the less the need for the latter. Happily the fact is recognized by most public benefactors, and playground form the large part of most modern training institutions. In many of the great metropolises these playgrounds exist entirely apart from any school and to them all children are welcome and free.

There is, perhaps, no better school for laying the foundation of a good character than the playground. Here the child learns self-restraint, self-control, self-sacrifice, loyalty to his team or club, the value of organization, self-respect, truthfulness and obedience in a manner in which he will never have a chance to learn again at any other period of his existence, and in a cosmopolitan city such as our own, playgrounds would form an important factor in welding together the different nationalities and speaking the knowledge of the English language.

Give Them a Place to Play

Plenty of room for dives and dens, glitter and glare of sin; Plenty of room for prison pens, gather the criminals in.

Plenty of room for gaols and courts, willing enough to pay.

But never a place for the lads to race,—no, never a place to play.

Plenty of room for shops and stores, Mammon must have the best;

Plenty of room for running sores that rot in the city's breast.

Plenty of room for lures that lead the hearts of our youth astray;

But never a cent on the playgrounds spent,—no, never a place to play.

Plenty of room for schools and halls, plenty of room for art;

Plenty of room for teas and balls, platform, stage and mart.

Proud is the city—she finds a place for many a lad today.

But she's more than blind if she fails to find a place for the boy to play.

Give them a chance for innocent sport—give them a chance for fun.

Better a playground plot than a court and a gaol when the harm is done.

Give them a chance—if you stint them now, tomorrow you'll have to pay.

A larger bill for darker ill; so give them a chance to play."

WITH THE PHILOSOPHERS

René Descartes

If it were not for the "Doubting Thomases" in the world, the sciences would have made but little headway, and we should still be living in an age of superstition and ignorance, victims of delusion and stagnation. Descartes was a doubter, or to use Huxley's term, an agnostic. He would accept nothing without proof, though this skepticism was not "to preclude belief but to summon and assure belief as distinct from the insane submission to authority, to prejudice or to impulse. In this process of doubting everything, the philosopher comes at last to one fact which he cannot doubt the fact that he exists; for if he did not exist he could not be thinking his doubt. Cogito, ergo sum, is on point of absolute knowledge: it is a clear and ultimate perception.

The Idea of God—From the "Meditations."

There only remains, therefore, the idea of God, in which I must consider whether there is anything that cannot be supposed to originate with myself. By the name God, I understand a substance infinite, eternal, immutable, independent, all-knowing, all-powerful, and by which I myself, and every other thing that exists,—if any such there be,—were created. But these properties are so great and excellent that the more attentively I consider them, the less I feel persuaded that the idea I have of them owes its origin to myself alone. And thus it is absolutely necessary to conclude, from all that I have before said, that God exists; for though the idea of substance be in my mind owing to this—that I myself am a substance—I should not, however, have the idea of an infinite substance, seeing I am a finite being, unless it were given me by some substance in reality infinite.

And I must not imagine that I do not apprehend the infinite by a true idea, but only by the negation of the finite, in the same way that I comprehend repose and darkness by the negation of motion and light; since, on the contrary, I clearly perceive that there is more reality in the infinites substance than in the finite, and therefore that in some way I possess the perception (notion) of the infinite before that of the finite, that the perception of God before that of myself; for how could I know that doubt, desire or that something is wanting to me, and that I am not wholly perfect, if I possessed no idea of a being more perfect than myself, by comparison with which I knew the deficiencies of my nature?

And it cannot be said that this idea of God is perhaps materially false, and consequently that it may have arisen from nothing (in other words, that it may exist in me from my imperfection) as I before said of the ideas of heat and cold, and the like; for on the contrary, as this idea is very clear and distinct, and contains in itself more objective reality than any other, there can be no one of itself more true, or less open to the suspicion of falsity.

The idea, I say, of a being supremely perfect and infinite, is in the highest degree true; for although perhaps we may imagine that such a being does not exist, we nevertheless cannot suppose that this idea represents nothing real, as I have already said of the idea of cold. It is likewise clear and distinct in the highest degree, since whatever the mind clearly and distinctly conceives as real or true, and as implying any perfection, is contained entirely in this idea. And this is true, nevertheless, although I do not comprehend the infinite, and although there may be in God an infinity of things that I cannot comprehend, nor perhaps even compass by thought in any way; for it is of the nature of the infinite that it should not be comprehended by the finite; and it is enough that I rightly understand this, and judge that all which I clearly perceive, and in which I know there is some perfection, and perhaps also an infinity of properties of which I am ignorant, are formally or eminently in God, in order that the idea of him may become the most true, clear, and distinct of all the ideas in my mind.

But perhaps I am something more than I suppose myself to be, and it may be that all those perfections which I attribute to God in some way exist potentially in me, although they do not yet show themselves and are not reduced to act. Indeed, I am already conscious that my knowledge is being increased and perfected by degrees; and I see nothing to prevent it from thus gradually increasing to infinity, nor any reason why, after such increase and perfection, I should not be able thereby to acquire all the other perfections of the Divine nature; nor in fine, why the power I possess of acquiring those perfections, if it really now exists in me, should not be sufficient to produce the ideas of them. Yet on looking more closely into the matter I discover that this cannot be; for in the first place, although it were true that my knowledge daily acquired

new degrees of perfection, and although there were potentially in my nature much that was not as yet actually in it, still all these excellences make not the slightest approach to the idea I have of the Deity, in whom there is no perfection merely potentially, but all actually existent; for it is even an unmistakable token of imperfection in my knowledge, that it is augmented by degrees. Further, although my knowledge increases more and more, nevertheless I am not therefore induced to think that it will ever be actually infinite, since it can never reach that point beyond which it shall be incapable of further increase. But I conceive God as actually infinite, so that nothing can be added to his perfection. And in fine, I readily perceive that the objective being of an idea cannot be produced by a being that is merely potentially existent,—which properly speaking is nothing, but only a being existing formally or actually.

And truly, I see nothing in all that I have now said which it is not easy for any one who shall carefully consider it, to discern by the natural light; but when I allow my attention in some degree to relax, the vision of my mind being obscured and as it were blinded by the images of sensible objects, I do not readily remember the reason why the idea of a being more perfect than myself must of necessity have proceeded from a being in reality more perfect. On this account I am here desirous to inquire further whether I, who possess this idea of God, could exist supposing there were no God. And I ask, from whom could I in that case derive my existence? Perhaps from myself or from my parents, or from some other causes less perfect than God; for anything more perfect, or even equal to God, cannot be thought or imagined. But if I were independent of every other existence, and were myself the author of my being, I should doubt of nothing, I should desire nothing, and in fine, no perfection would be wanting to me; for I should have bestowed upon myself every perfection of which I possess the idea, and I should thus be God. And it must not be imagined that what is now wanting to me is perhaps of more difficult acquisition than that of which I am already possessed; for on the contrary it is quite manifest that it was a matter of much higher difficulty that I, a thinking being, should arise from nothing, than it would be for me to acquire the knowledge of many things of which I am ignorant, and which are merely the accidents of a thinking substance; and certainly, if I possessed of myself the greater perfection of which I have now spoken,—in other words, have denied to myself things that may be more easily obtained, as that infinite variety of knowledge of which I am at present destitute. I could not indeed have denied to myself any property which I perceive is contained in the idea of God, because there is none of these that seems to be more difficult to make or acquire; and if there were any that should happen to be more difficult to acquire, they would certainly appear so to me (supposing that I myself were the source of the other things I possess) because I should discover in them a limit to my power.

LITERARY NOTES

"Rose Carson—Immortal"

The favor with which the autobiographical style of novel is meeting at present would seem to indicate that it is a most approved method of story telling. What was undoubtedly one of the biggest novels, if not the biggest novel of last year—Mary S. Watts' "Nathan Burke," was given forth as autobiography, and so well did the author adopt this style that many people were led into believing that the story was actual autobiography. Again this year, one of the really worth while books appears in the same guise; E. B. Dewing's "A Big Horse to Ride." "Among the people of the professional stage," says The Boston Transcript, "who have trodden the paths of fiction Rose Carson (the heroine of 'A Big Horse to Ride') bids fair to become immortal. . . . She is a woman such as few novel writers are able to create, and she is a woman who is bound to take a leading place in English fiction. She and her story possess distinction of a rare kind—the distinction of imaginative reality that impresses the reader with its truth."

The old saying that "A prophet is not without honor save in his own country," does not seem to apply particularly to Mary S. Watts, for Mrs. Watts' latest novel, "The Legacy," is listed among the six best sellers in Cincinnati, the author's home town. It also appears upon the list of books most in demand—as compiled by "The Bookman"—in many other leading cities scattered throughout the country, among these being Providence, Philadelphia and Milwaukee. Boston long ago voiced its praise of the book, as also have Cleveland and New York.

One other book which appears prominently on "The Bookman's" list is "Members of the Family" by Owen Wister.

Among the non-fiction publications a leader in many cities is Helena Rutherford Ely's "Practical Flower Garden."

"Now-Now's"

The follow story from Jack London's recently published "The Cruise of the Snark" would seem to indicate that the place of the Jersey mosquito as leader in the long line of insect pests, had been pre-empted by the "now-nows."

"I made the strategic mistake of undressing on the edge of a steep bank where I could dive in but could not climb out. When I was ready

to dress I had a hundred yards' walk on the bank before I could reach my clothes. At the first step fully 10,000 non-nows landed upon me. At the second step I was walking in a cloud. By the third step the sun was dimmed in the sky. After that I don't know what happened. When I arrived at my clothes I was a maniac. And here enters my grand tactical error. There is only one rule of conduct in dealing with now-nows. Never swat them. Whatever you do, don't swat them. They are so vicious that in the instant of annihilation they eject their last atom of poison into your carcass. You must pluck them deliberately between thumb and forefinger, and persuade them gently to remove their proboscides from your quivering flesh. It is like pulling teeth. But the difficulty was that the teeth sprouted faster than I could pull them, so I swatted, and, so doing, filled myself full of their poison. This was a week ago. At the present moment I resemble a sadly neglected smallpox convalescent."

So great was the demand for Mark Lee Luther's "The Sovereign Power" that the first large edition was nearly all sold before the date of publication. A second edition is in preparation and will come from the press immediately. Perhaps part of the demand for the novel is due to Mr. Luther's choice of subject. Aeroplanes and aviators figure largely in the story. But it is certain that the popularity of Mr. Luther as an author of stirring tales is accountable for a large share of the enthusiasm.

Somehow Scipio Le Moyne, the vigorous Western character from Owen Wister's new book, "Members of the Family," and Ambassador Bryce do not seem to go well together. The picture conjured up by the thought of Scipio jaunting around over the plains, lugging the two somewhat bulky volumes of Bryce's "The American Commonwealth" with him, studying them whenever he has the opportunity, is so delightfully absurd that it might well offer possibilities to the funny paper cartoonist. And yet one of the many questions which Scipio puts to himself is fully answered in Mr. Bryce's book, and if he really wants to know, the best thing he can do is to consult that authority. Scipio says, "Will you tell me why, in a country where everybody is born equal, the legislature should be a bigger fool than anybody else?" Mr. Bryce answers this question in a number of places in "The American Commonwealth," notably in the chapter on "Why the Best Men Do Not Go Into Politics."

Fifty years ago an Austrian monk named Mendel made experiments with plants and animals in an endeavor to deduce the principles of heredity, publishing obscurely his observations. For almost forty years these observations were ignored, until in 1895 de Vries rediscovered Mendel's work and brought it forcibly to the attention of the public. Where, a few years ago, comparatively speaking, Mendel's theories were practically unknown, now every gardener, poultry breeder or breeder of small animals realizes that a knowledge of them is the first essential of success.

R. C. Punnett, Fellow of Gonville and Caius College and Professor of Biology in the University of Cambridge, tells in his "Mendelism," just what these laws of Mendel's are, presenting them in such a way that they will be of most service to the practical gardener or breeder. From a study of the laws as applied to plants and animals, Professor Punnett turns to a consideration of them as applied to the human species.

The minute that a really big novel is published, or in fact a really big thing in any line, be it art, literature or poetry, the critics at once begin to draw comparisons and see resemblances to the work of the old masters. This is probably due to the prevalent custom of judging works by past standards. Whether this is just or not is not now the point, but that the critics have found the really big in Mary S. Watts' "The Legacy" and are somewhat confused trying to liken it to this or that great writer of days gone by, is interesting. There is an amusing difference of opinion as to which writer Mrs. Watts most resembles. Of course, a number see in "The Legacy" similarities to Thackeray. The New York Times compares Letty Green, Mrs. Watts' principal character, to Becky Sharp, further adding that "there is a strong family likeness between some of Mrs. Watts' characters and Thackeray's." The Boston Transcript differing with the Times critic declares that "it is Trollope rather than Thackeray of whom one is reminded in reading 'The Legacy,'" stating that "if you like Trollope you will like 'The Legacy.'" Milton Bronner, writing in the Kentucky Post, refers to the likeness existing between Mrs. Watts and De Morgan. Elaborating still more upon this point of similarity, Mr. Bronner compares Mrs. Watts' work to the paintings of the Dutch and Flemish artists. The Chicago Record Herald on the other hand sees in Mrs. Watts primarily only Mrs. Watts. The critic of that paper says, "Mrs. Watts' style is her own, her view of life is her own, the novel is American, warp and woof."

Golfer (who has at last holed out)—How many is that, 17 or 18?

Superior Caddie (wearily)—I dinna ken.

Golfer—What! Haven't you been counting?

Superior Caddie—Mon, as fer counting, it's no' a caddie yer wantin', it's a cler-r-k!