

English.

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LITERATURE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN.

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NOTHING is more evident to a student of young children than their pleasure in a story. A child will cease play to hear of some animal or child, especially when the story is of a pleasant type or set in rhyme. A young boy of seven reads of "Two lit-tle girls who sang so well the rob-in closed his ears and flew a-way," and his small but select audience, aged two, listens open-mouthed to his loud recital. A little child of less than two has a book of ballads ornamented with small pictures, and before she speaks plainly has learnt to know a large number of ballads, to find the place of each, and waxes indignant if any jocular person varies her favorites by missing or inserting a word. These are types of many such cases, which could be cited by every reader who has been much with children. Every teacher knows the delight with which the promise to "read a story" is hailed. Good literature systematically read to a class has a formative influence not surpassed. The teacher can mould at will the taste of her class. We are sometimes asked what value is there in it to the child who has to earn his living early. Our utilitarian questioner is often of a severely mathematical turn of mind, one who calls arithmetic the "logic of the Public School." Granting him that Arithmetic is a power in training not to be denied, yet we must point out to him that the arithmetical faculty lies undeveloped for the first few years of childhood and we cannot wait for our training, we must begin with a faculty which is awake and active, and so we begin with stories. What an enormous appetite we find ready for such, is well known. And there is a training in observation, in weighing and balancing, in memory, in language, going on in the mind of the intelligent child that is very remarkable, as when a boy of three refused longer to listen to a story on account of the unsuitable garb of the "Prince"; considering "blue velvet, lace, and a beautiful gold brooch" very unmanly, he rose up saying, disgustedly, "Aw, that's too funny a picture," and played noisily to avoid hearing it. The terse observation and the evidence of his power to see mentally the "picture" of the "Prince" in his girlish dress, showed the child's powers to be good and his taste cultivated in the direction of the suitable. A child receives, therefore, a practical benefit from hearing stories, and it is of great value, especially in this age when everything is to result in power to obtain money, when the accomplishments that in older lands are acquired for themselves or for pleasure, in this land and in this age are so much stock-in-trade for their young possessor, who soon becomes aware of their market value. Believing in the influence of literature upon children even of tender years, it would be well for parents to be more careful in their selections of rhymes. What can be the influence, moral, æsthetic or grammatical of, say,

"Tom, Tom, the piper's son, stole a pig
And away he run,"

or such a gem as

"Taffy was a Welshman,
Taffy was a thief,
Taffy came to my house
And stole a piece of beef."

And as for the story of murder contained in "Blue-Beard," the less said the better. I have never perpetrated it since a little lad of about three, after hearing it with much less than the usual number of gruesome details, exclaimed with a strong shudder, "O, I don't like that story, it makes me feel afraid of tramps."

I regret that I have no list of books suited to

young children in our schools, but would gladly receive such a list from any reader, and am sure the editor would give it space in these columns. Such books on a teacher's desk, especially in an ungraded school, would be a great help, for a senior pupil could read quietly to the little ones when the teacher was too busy. The influence would be felt by the reader, whose expression in reading would improve with the endeavor to keep the meaning clear to her infantile audience.

And as for cruelty, there is nothing that will cure it more quickly than reading and telling stories about merciful deeds. A little "Band of Mercy" in a class has a wonderful effect. The children are on the lookout for subjects to tell about at the next meeting, and their observation is quickened. They form their minds into a habit of mercy, and by their telling of what they have seen or done their language and conversational powers are greatly strengthened. The "Band of Mercy," with perhaps such an addition as "Lily" or "Rosebud," may be simply a name so far as complexity of organization is concerned, but it is an attractive name and does much better for a Friday afternoon than "Language Lesson" or "Conversation Class." And the results will not be in the language only. The cruel boy, finding it unpopular or fearing the criticism of the "Band," will hide his cruelty or drop it altogether. And sharp indeed are their criticisms. "I think it dreadful for a Sunday-school teacher to wear birds upon her hat," said one damsel to me. My defence on the ground of thoughtlessness sounded very lame, as I hastily put my own head-gear under review. Such a frightful thing as vivisection would not be tolerated for one instant by such a class, and let me say, for the honor of Canadian teachers, that such a thing as dissecting even an insect has never come to my knowledge. If there is a teacher who would so outrage the tender sensibilities of children, that teacher should be at once removed from the position of educator, being totally unfit to train to purity and goodness.

The First Class should have lessons on some beautiful poems, such as:

"Lady Moon, Lady Moon, where are you roving?"

The teacher need not confine herself to the Reader, but selecting from anywhere, make an impression on the taste by having a stanza of a good poem memorized, or a paragraph talked about. One little poem, at least, in a month, would not be much, but would have a fine effect in the end. When the child gets to the Second Class the work should go on with even greater zeal, not allowed to slacken because the children are less 'cute and attractive than they were when little. Many children fall into dullness in this class, partly on this account, and partly because they have more "tables" and "definitions" put into them, and there is so much difficulty in making them hold the tables, etc., that there is not time or inclination for anything else. Literature cannot be too highly esteemed as a means of training the young, and no teacher who wants a good feeling in her class can despise the study of good, pure literature. Read "Black Beauty," or "Beautiful Joe," and your bad boys have vanished and mild, interested faces are to be seen in place of the hard, defiant grin so distressing to see on a young face. After a lesson on a suitable poem the interested child may be led to speak as you would not have believed possible if the teacher has tact to draw out his thoughts. It pays to take time for studying literature in junior classes.

CORRESPONDENCE.

SUBSCRIBER. 1. "What is the use or need to keep at my own cost this lazy steed?" "What," interrog. pronoun, neut., subj. of "is;" "keep" is the infinitive (i.e. the noun form) of the verb "keep," connected by the preposition "to" with the noun "use" (or) "need;" "my" possess. adj. to cost; "own" adj. mod. "cost."

2. Let him go feed upon the public ways;

I want him *only* for the holidays.
"Him" is the object of "let;" "let" is the imperative mood of the verb "let;" "go" is infinitive of verb "go," depending (adverbially) on the principal verb "let;" "feed" is infinitive, depending on "go;" "only" is an adverb limiting the adverbial phrase "for the holidays."

3. "Let me see him." is not different from (2).

4. "Between you and me he'll find he's made a big mistake," is correct but inelegant. The sentence is complex; the first phrase "between you and me," is a sort of absolute phrase. "This being said between . . .;" "he'll find" (principal clause) (that) he's made a big mistake (noun clause, object of "will find").

J. C. Addison did not make two divisions in the "Vision of Mirza." It was only the compiler of P. S. Reader who hit on the unhappy device.

L. F. 1. Of course the "Bugle Song," st. 3, is figurative. The echoes of the bugle roll from hill to hill, so the response of one heart to another heart will go on resounding, not, however, dying away like the bugle echoes, but growing stronger and stronger forever.

2. Caldon Low, that is, Caldon Hill.

3. The situation in the *Road to the Trenches* represents, let us say, soldiers in the Crimean War at the siege of Sebastopol. A party is advancing to relieve the soldiers on duty in the trenches, when one of the number drops from the line. He begs (stanza 1) to be left, while the others go forward to their duty, asking that the soldiers returning from the trenches should pick him up as they passed. His comrades agree to this, but he dies before the soldiers who have been relieved can find him.

M. M. B. 1. Nouns have no inflection for person; pronouns have a so-called inflection for person, which, however, is false, for the difference of *I* and *him* and *he* is not a difference made by inflection but a difference of root. There is a rule that the verb agrees with its subject in person and number, but there are only a few scattered relics of its observance in English. We see the observance in "I write," as against "he writes," "they write," but it is no longer true with "I, he, we, you, they, wrote."

2. In "the parent looked at the child," parent is a noun of common gender, that is, it may be used to signify either mother or father. Of course it could not be neuter; are mothers and fathers of no sex?

3. Lā'bel.

4. "When four o'clock came they were soon at their play." The sentence is complex. "Were" is modified by three adverbial modifiers: (1) the adverb "soon;" (2) the adverbial phrase (place) "at their play;" (3) the subordinate adverbial clause "when four o'clock came."

M. C. The expression "I am going to go," meaning "I intend to go," is good English, and is grammatically correct.

SUBSCRIBER. The expression "I have made fully eight," does not imply "more than eight," but simply that the number of eight has been attained. There might be nine or ten, etc., but all that "fully eight" means is that there are certainly *eight full units and not less*.

THOU WORKEST NEVER ALONE.

Go make thy garden fair as thou canst,
Thou workest never alone
Perchance he whose plot is next to thine
Will see it and mend its own.

— Robert Collyer.

THE Copp, Clark Co., Ltd., have just issued two new books of Arithmetical Problems, compiled by Mr. W. N. Cuthbert. The Problems are widely graded for use from the first-class up to Entrance and Public School Leaving classes, and by their use teachers will be saved much valuable time which otherwise must be devoted to originating or hunting up new problems.