

knowledge of English, both in writing and appreciation of literature, is any illustration of public school work in this field then something needs to be done and quickly."

One feels there is some truth in the criticism of our correspondent. The study of English in our advanced and high schools is not sufficiently serious nor pursued with that thoroughness which the importance of the subject demands. Very few of the graduates of these schools go out with the ability to express themselves correctly either in speaking or writing their own language, and there is a lack of taste for and discernment of what is excellent in English literature. It is not wise to smooth over these imperfections. They exist. In the majority of our primary schools there is a fairly good attempt made to lay a foundation in English, but there is failure in the higher grades. Whether this is due to too many studies, to lack of interest, or to imperfect instruction cannot be fairly estimated without a thorough test. It is important that such a test be made.

#### The February Supplement.

In the picture this month, Milton in his blindness is represented dictating "Paradise Lost" to his daughters. Anxiety mingled with discomfort is plainly seen on the children's faces. Perhaps they are kept too long at such tasks, or they do not understand the meaning of what they are writing. There is an evident lack of sympathy between them. Milton although of a noble disposition, became severe and overbearing in his own household in later life. Perhaps there was some excuse for him. While his intellectual powers were at their highest, blindness and a suffering body made the task of composing his greatest work not a happy one for him or his children.

The painting is by Mihaly Munkacsy (Moon-kaat'-see), a distinguished Hungarian artist, and is one of the treasures of the Lenox Library, New York.

#### Wooden Bridges.

In a country where wood is abundant its employment in all possible utilities is a matter in which all classes are deeply concerned. Mr. T. B. Kidner, director of manual training in New Brunswick, has a suggestive article in a recent number of the *American Carpenter and Builder*, showing the

advantages of wood over steel for certain kinds of bridges, not of the largest size. He points out that many good examples of wooden bridges still remain in New Brunswick to attest the skill and ingenuity of the bridge carpenters of a generation or so ago. Then, all bridges were built of wood; but steel had largely taken its place, until within a few past years. Now government engineers have once more resorted to wood for all spans up to 180 feet.

Several reasons have led to the choice of wood for all but large bridges. Every third year a steel bridge requires a thorough painting, while a wooden one of modern construction, roofed in from end to end, needs no paint except an initial coat of hot tar applied to the joints when first put together. Such a bridge should last a century with a renewal of the cedar shingles of the roof every twenty-five years. The hardwood floor of a steel bridge rots long before it wears out, but in the case of a covered wooden bridge the reverse is the case; the hardwood flooring will wear to extreme thinness before showing any signs of rot. Finally the cost of transportation of steel is, in the case of long distances, excessive, while for the wooden bridge the adjacent forests supply all material and a portable sawmill the equipment necessary for carrying on the work.

Mr. Kidner's article is one of great interest to teachers and students, showing some of the possibilities open to this and other provinces of Canada where there is an abundance of wood, and the importance of husbanding and properly valuing our native material.

#### Winter Quarters.

Down in the marshes by the alder clump,  
The muskrat seeks his mud-domed house;  
Snug in the hollow of a poplar stump  
Is curled the light-foot, white-foot mouse.

A boulder wall protects the home  
Where chipmunk reigns, a drowsy king;  
And five good feet beneath the loam  
Old gaffer woodchuck waits the spring.

Rustling the brier and the frosted grass,  
Complaining sparrows hunt for haws;  
Low through the tassels of the hemlock pass  
The heavy crows with hungry caws.

But one in all a world of white,  
Brave-hearted, laughs in silver glee—  
That stub-tailed, club-tailed, snub-tailed sprite,  
Our winter-lover, chickadee.

—*Youth's Companion.*