

English.

All articles and communications intended for this department should be addressed to the ENGLISH EDITOR, EDUCATIONAL JOURNAL, Room 5, 11½ Richmond Street West, Toronto.

SONG OF THE GRASS.

M. A. W.

This delicate and sympathetic little song gives an opportunity for training in expressing the spirit of the poem, there being very few difficult words to draw off the attention. The style of writing is so suited to the subject that it attracts no notice, until the beauty of it strikes one suddenly by its appropriateness.

Before studying the poem as a poem, there must be word-recognition and word-meaning thoroughly understood. It is best to have the pupils examine the lines and seek out the difficult words, but a chart, made upon large sheets of paper, the words written clearly in oil-crayon, will be invaluable in review work and in busy work. The chart should not be shown until independent effort has been made, otherwise the full value of the lesson is lost. After the class have indicated their difficulties, the chart may be compared, and the pronunciation carefully shown. Syllables and diacritical marks, say of *accent*, long and short sounds of vowels, *silent letters*, and *hard "ch,"* should be used, but phonetic spelling, as *kot* for *caught*, should never be shown to children, who are apt to adopt the easier and more attractive method of representing thought, thus giving the teacher an unnecessary task. For busy work, the chart may be used in these ways: making a beautiful copy of the words; using the words in sentences; giving synonyms; arranging them alphabetically; arranging them in order of size; arranging them so as to make a beautifully neat slate; writing lines in which they occur. If you have no chart, the blackboard must be freely used, and colored chalk (which, by the way, is very hard on the hands) is a great help in marking silent letters, and drawing interested attention.

There are not many difficult words, but we may be sure of some, at least, as:

Clos(z)e, nois'y, shad'y, a'ged, mer'ry, ev'ry-where, ples'ant, toil'ing, si'lently, star'ry, nit, qui'etly, wel'come, gent'le, num'berd, deck, hum'ble, joy'fully, raise, whose, command', bu'tify.

The meanings should be impressed by little, bright sentences, made by the children, if possible. The teacher may read the stanzas, replacing all difficult words by synonymous words or phrases, as the sixth stanza:

"Here I come, creeping everywhere;
When you are counted among those who are dead,
(Lying) In your quiet and noiseless grave;
In the happy spring-time I will come
And ornament your silent grave,
Creeping, silently creeping, everywhere."

Seventh stanza:

"I shall raise (or speak forth) my humble (lowly, meek) song of praise to God who has commanded (or ordered) me to make the land (earth) beautiful."

It would seem that the pupils should now thoroughly understand the lesson, but it will be well, yet, to ask if there is any other point upon which they are not certain.

Having settled what we may call the drudgery, the thought claims our attention, and we ask a few questions to get at the spirit of the poem.

"What sort of (I almost said 'person') thing is the grass?" (Modest, unassuming, useful.) "If it could speak, what kind of voice would it have?" (*Quiet, gentle, but not mean*, because it knows it is worthy.) "Do you think you could read the first verse as the grass would say it, if it were really speaking?" "Read it over silently, suit your voice to 'creeping,' 'sunny hillside,' 'dusty roadside,' 'noisy brook,' 'shady nook.' Remember the grass all the time. When you think you can read it, let it be known by the uplifted hand."

The class will listen with critical ears to pronunciation, emphasis, rate, and shades of expression, and will be eager to read themselves.

After the reading once through, have a talk about the grass.

"How we begin to love the grass, as it quietly tells its story of perseverance and kindness! Notice where it goes! Name the places over; be-

gin at the first, and end with the last 'silent home.' Notice how many are glad because of it! Name them, all, from 'the aged poor' to 'the gentle cow' and 'the merry bird,' are glad of its coming.

"Notice how quietly it comes!

"Noiselessly—as the daylight
Comes when the night is done,
And the crimson streak on Ocean's cheek
Grows into the great sun;
Noiselessly—as the springtime
Her crown of verdure weaves,
And all the trees, on all the hills,
Open their thousand leaves,

so quietly, but surely, comes the green mantle of the grass, and so, without a creak, or strain, or jar, moves

'In solemn silence, all'

the works of the Almighty God.

"How wonderful the grass is when we try to count the millions of blades needed to cover one field with green! What a work it would be, and how expensive, if some one had to cut green paper into blades of imitation grass to cover one field! And oh, what disgust and astonishment the horses, cows, sheep, goats, gees, snails, grubs, and insects of every kind would show when they tried to eat such grass! What a great loss it would be to them! How we should prize the grass! What stanza says it is 'more welcome than the flowers'? Why? Which is the stanza you love most? Read it, then learn it off by heart, to say next lesson-day.

"Why should we like to be like the grass? Tell some of the ways in which we may imitate it. (Modesty; usefulness; cheerfulness; perseverance, though small, to do great good; and lastly, gratitude and obedience to God, who sets each person work to do for Him.)

"Read the poem again."

MILITARY TRAINING.

The introduction of military organization and drill has proved a splendid success in the New York Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb. Dr. Enoch Henry Currier, the head of this beautiful home, said, in a conversation with the writer, that it is not only an effective aid in securing discipline, but has also, in a remarkably short time, given the boys a good carriage and cured them of their shuffling gait. It has been for years a problem of managers of institutions for the deaf-mutes and the blind how to get their pupils to walk properly and to give them an erect figure. Various plans have been tried, but none has given as much satisfaction as the military drill in the New York institution. Of course, the success of any plan depends entirely upon the manager of it; but all will admit that a poor one must always fail. Dr. Currier's endorsement of military drill, for this reason, has particular weight. He is a thorough schoolman, and has for many years been a devoted investigator of the peculiarly difficult problems involved in the educational work which he has chosen as his life profession.

An example of a successful disciplinary experiment may be interesting. The boys most difficult to govern, owing to the strength of their wilfulness were asked to act as sergeants, and were decorated with the insignia of that office. They were told that as soon as their superiors should have reason to complain of their conduct, they would, according to military rule, be reduced to the rank of privates and lose their decoration. The result is that since the adoption of the plan there has not been a single occasion for disciplinary interference on the part of the head of the school.

Opponents of military drill fail to properly recognize its advantages, which greatly outweigh the points they use as arguments against its introduction. In the hands of trained and experienced educators, it cannot but be most desirable for schools of every kind.—*New York School Journal.*

He prayeth best who loveth best
All things, both great and small,
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.

—From the Ancient Mariner.

Special Papers.

GRAVEST OF QUESTIONS.

WHAT DO OUR BOYS AND GIRLS READ?

BY WASHINGTON GLADDEN, D.D.

Several of the teachers in our public schools have appealed to me for counsel and aid with regard to the matter of which I speak this evening; they have placed before me the facts respecting the reading of their pupils; they have marked, with the solicitude of those who watch for souls, the effects of this reading upon the character; and they have put into my hands some melancholy descriptions of the mental and moral decay of these victims of the reading habit. It is in obedience to their earnest request that I endeavor to bring before you some of these facts and observations.

It is probable that the great majority of the parents in this city are imperfectly informed with respect to the books that their children are reading. Many of them care nothing about it; they have the notion that the habit of reading is a good habit, and that when their boys and girls are engaged in reading they must needs be profitably employed. Many others, who know something about the evils of bad reading, are not so vigilant as they ought to be to detect and prevent it, and their children read surreptitiously great numbers of injurious books. The intelligent teacher often knows more about this matter than the parent; the teacher sometimes watches the mental development of the pupil more carefully, and judges respecting it more dispassionately than the parent; and the teacher sometimes notes the symptoms of mental deterioration due to bad reading, when the parent does not observe them. The parent ought to consult with the teacher frequently with regard to all questions of this nature.

I must say, in this connection, that, so far as I have been able to investigate, the public school teachers of this city are fully alive to the importance of this subject, and are doing all they can to encourage good reading habits among the children. Doubtless those who have communicated with me are those most interested in the matter, but inquiry in other schools has disclosed the same intelligent interest. Some of the teachers—very likely all of those in the grammar grades—suggest good books for their pupils to read, aid them in filling out their library cards, and endeavor in various ways to stimulate their love of good reading. I know one teacher in a primary grade who keeps on the blackboard the names of the pupils, with the titles of the books read by each one; and the list of books thus displayed shows wise direction. I know another who has organized in the lowest grammar grade a little society for the observation of nature and the study of natural history.

These periodicals to which I have last alluded, which seem to be very popular, are constructed on a plan which is likely to deceive the very elect. Indeed, I think it likely that it deceives the managers of the periodicals themselves, so that they think themselves to be public benefactors. One of these—and it appears to be the most popular of all the periodicals taken by the boys and girls—contains notes on the Sunday-school lessons, and much useful and pious reading of one sort and another; but its stories are what may be called sugar-coated sensationalism; that is to say, they deal largely with sensational topics, with the loud profession of warning boys and girls against the evils they describe. One of these stories under my eye proceeds to tell how a company of boys formed a secret society for various mischievous operations, and finally ran away and came to grief, of course; but the details of their mischief are worked out with great minuteness, and the practice of the young rascals is sure to make a stronger impression on the reader's mind than the preaching of the author. Very many of the readers boys be thinking all the while what stupid these boys were to have been circumvented and caught; how the mischief might have been better managed; and the effect of it all will be very nearly as bad as if there were no such pious purpose as the author professes. The ancient wise man said, "Come, ye children, hearken unto me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord." But these modern, wise men say, in effect, "Come, ye children, hearken unto us, and we will show you how bad