

The Literature of "Arbor Day."

The very general popular observance of Arbor Day by the public schools of this city shows what can be done by energy and enthusiasm applied to a good cause.

The actual number of trees planted in Lancaster to-day will probably not materially affect the rain fall or other meteorological conditions of this locality, nor even increase its fruit supply; but the wholesome sentiments inspired by the occasion and the pregnant thoughts evoked by the celebration cannot fail to popularize a subject of great moral and material interest.

In its economical aspect, forestry has been forcibly presented by many writers, and what they have advanced in support of its supreme utility has not been gained.

In the Western States, where the treeless prairies, with fruitful soil and yielding rich harvest, have been exposed to the fury of storms and the quick extremes of weather that all bare countries are subject to, tree planting has received scientific attention; and the shelter of his farm by the forest and hedge-rows is a matter of concern to the Western farmer scarcely secondary to his house roof and stock shed.

In this land of advanced agricultural methods and of plenty the waste of the timber lands, accompanied by greater extremes of temperature and drought, by the drying up of our springs, the diminution of our streams and the decay of our orchards, has stolen upon us almost unobserved, but with alarming pace.

Our townsmen, Simon P. Eby, esq., pointed out these things very forcibly in a pamphlet printed some years ago, which was noticed in the INTELLIGENCER at the time, and his intelligent observations have been verified by the experience and report of hundreds of our most intelligent agriculturists.

Nevertheless, the repair of this waste, the replenishment of the woods and orchards, has been very tardy. It is such a slight job to fell the forest, and so tedious a task to grow its successor; and so many who plant the tree and vine can scarcely hope to eat of their fruit that the selfishness and impatience of man manifest themselves in ruthless destruction without regard to the future.

For every consideration, therefore, the institution and celebration of Arbor Day make an event worthy of the interest it has created here; and the literature of the subject which is presented in our reports can hardly fail to make a lasting impression on the public mind.

With the rare felicity of expression which characterizes his addresses, State Superintendent Higbee points out the good uses of more frequent communings with nature, who speaks "a various language" to him that seeks her secrets and woods her in the hiding places of the hills and woods. In the concluding passages of his admirable address the state superintendent lets fall some hints that the twenty-two thousand teachers of the state should take into serious consideration. The trouble with too many of them is they do not find "tongues in trees and books in the running brooks," and they have neither the taste nor the ability to take their scholars out among the spring beauties of the vernal season and interpret the lessons of the flowers and rocks, and streams and trees, which have many potent lessons of truth than any patent prepared text works on "hygiene and physiology, with special reference to the effects of alcoholic drinks and narcotics on the human stomach."

The heart of childhood, nurtured with associations such as the superintendent directs attention to, will gain something that is not given to the books to teach, and is not to few taskmasters to impart; but everything that tends to lift popular education toward that level is to be hailed by those who would inspire the youthful mind with the best aspirations.

In the parody upon Shak. speaks his Seven Ages, which Dr. Higbee quotes in his address, will be recognized one of his own compositions, which he wrote thirty years ago for The Guardian; and when he himself was a teacher in the public schools of this city he will be remembered as one who loved to follow the Conestoga in its winding courses, who knew the places where the wild flowers grew, who caught the first glimpse of the arbutus peeping out from its leafy blanket, and who in frequent communings with nature "in her visible forms" learned, to the profit of his visible career, the lessons which he now so forcibly impresses upon others.

There seems to be some dispute in Philadelphia between the controller and the county commissioners as to how the signatures of the latter functionaries shall be appended to bills which need them, so as to command the official respect of the controller and a warrant for their payment. The commissioners, who think they ought to get \$5,000 a year for not attending to their duties, want to let a clerk sign their names for them, or at most that their initials should suffice. The controller is of opinion that their signatures are needed. That seems to be reasonable.

A wide-awake member of the state legislature calls attention to the fact that the bills which propose to put into effect the constitutional provisions regulating railroads do not include the prohibition of free passes, and the punishment of those who issue and of those who use them. Happy thought! Let the constitution on that point be re-enacted, also, with fit pains and penalties.

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