

The Passing Hour.

THE MAGAZINE AND CHRONICLE OF
THE STIRLING DISTRICT ASYLUM, LARBERT.

"SCRIBIMUS INDOUET DOCTRINAM."—Horace.
"GATHER YE ROSEBUDS WHILE YE MAY,
OLD TIME IS STILL A-FLYING."—Herrick.

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Articles marked thus * are contributed by patients.



DONALD AND HIS GUINEA-PIGS.

EDITORIALS.

January-February-March, 1914.

THE precious stone for January is the garnet—constancy and fidelity ; for February the pearl—purity ; and for March, the jacinth or bloodstone—courage in affliction.

Much can be said, and much written concerning words, their meaning, significance, and associations. If we could trace each word in our language to its ultimate source of existence, what innumerable associations we should find attached to it through its varying relations to human history and progress. Certain words not in common use may have values and associations only to a limited few, either in a technical or literary sense, and the more complex and specialised the life and education of a nation becomes, the greater will be the diversity and variety of these word-groups, each of which may contain a mine of knowledge to its own experts, but is a mere stumbling block and rock of offence to the uninitiated. Every living language is like a great oak tree, constantly throwing off decayed or dead leaves and branches, sending out new leaves, twigs, and shoots, and dropping its acorns, which grow and spread and multiply, until the one tree ends in creating a mighty forest.

But when we leave the more highly specialised region of education, and come to the consideration of words in daily, common, or general use, we find that there are a few hundred words which will convey to everybody practically the same concrete or abstract image, as the case may be, for, mark you, almost every word in existence has both a concrete and an abstract significance, the one primary, the other secondary, that is, every word which in itself contains an idea. Some words are only joints, so to speak, linking together the important words into a definite form or body, just as do the articulations in the human frame. For example, "a," "an," and "the," we recognise frankly as such, by describing them as "articles," another name for "joints." To illustrate our meaning as regards the concrete and abstract significance of words, let us take what is perhaps the commonest word known to us—*bread*. The concrete image conveyed to most of our readers by this word is the ordinary flour loaf of common commerce, which we see placed before us at every daily meal—though it may in some parts of Scotland evoke the image of a thick bannock or oatmeal cake, this being there the most common form of bread-food. But who does not know of the abstract meaning, the secondary one, applied to bread in its religious, literary, or allegorical sense, as conveying the idea of not alone nourishment for the material body, but all that can go to the development and maintenance of mind, spirit, and soul. And so on, if we had space to multiply examples.

Again, there are words that not only have a simple, primary, or concrete, and a secondary, abstract, or allegorical meaning, but have a great variety of different meanings, both concrete and abstract. There is a story of a Frenchman who came over to this country labouring under

the delusion that he understood English, but who was driven to distraction with the apparently endless ways in which the word "box" was used. If any of our readers will sit down with pencil and paper, and write out all the applications of this deceptive little word he or she can think of, and send them to the office of the Editor of the P.H., a prize will be given to the contributor sending in the largest number of ways of using it. Another of these linguistic elasticities is the word "open," many diverse applications of which you will readily think of for yourselves, such as open door, open countenance, open country, open weather, open market, &c., &c. But for our own part we are going to confine ourselves for the moment to the one which seems best to suit the purpose of this editorial, for is not this the first or *opening* number of Volume XIV. of "The Passing Hour," the chronicle of the *opening* quarter of the year 1914?

Volume XIII. is closed, finished, and definitely done with, whatever its merits or demerits, and we hand it over to the past with a sigh of mixed satisfaction and deprecation, as if one would say, "Well, it may have been a poor enough thing, but such as it is, there it is!" And now springs up 1914, demanding its dues, insisting on its right to a fresh volume, whipping up the editorial conscience, and shouting for No. 1. Well, such as it is, kindly readers, here it is! The task is begun, and lest the editorial spirit should quail at the difficulties and uncertainties which futures have a little trick of presenting, we won't look too far ahead. May success crown our undertakings, and the undertakings of all into whose hands this little book may fall during the current year, is the sincere wish of the editorial staff of "The Passing Hour."

We acknowledge, with many thanks, receipt of copies of the following Asylum magazines, which we read with great interest and pleasure, sympathising with our fellow editors in their inevitable difficulties, and congratulating them on the brave show they continue to make with so much success:—*The Morningside Mirror* (November, December); *The New Moon* (January, February, March); *The Gartnavel Gazette* (January); *Excelsior* (January); and *Under the Dome* (March).

ED.

DONALD AND HIS GUINEA PIGS.

Poor, little, timid, gentle creatures! Why are they called pigs? They are not pigs; they are "cavies," classed by naturalists under the genus "rodent," of which rats are a species, but how unlike are they to these scallawags and brigands of the rodent tribe. Rats are voracious eaters, will eat anything and everything; even, when sharp set and driven desperate with the savagery of hunger, will attack the smaller animals, and are known to fall back upon each other when all other means of livelihood fail. Guinea pigs, or more properly, cavies, on the other hand, are vegetarians and dainty eaters, and the poor, stupid, little animals would rather die than eat anything else than their own chosen delicate fare. It has been said that where guinea pigs are, rats do not

come; but this is one of our many popular fallacies, as it has been proved by experiment that not only do they come where they are, but they actually attack and eat them, though probably only when hunger-pressed. One thing they have in common, the fierce and the gentle rodent—that is, an overweening capacity for multiplying their species, which in the case of the cavy is merely an inconvenience, but in the case of the rat, a menace and a danger.

Further, why are they called *guinea-pigs*? They did not come from Guinea; they came originally from South America, and possibly the appellation is really a corruption of the name "Guiana." They were introduced into Europe from South America some time in the sixteenth century. The timorous little creatures are of little practical value, and are chiefly kept as domestic pets in the same category as rabbits, white mice, tame hedgehogs, and such like.

Like most people leading a restricted life, our male patients, especially the long residents among them, become excessively attached to anything in the way of birds or beasts that are allowed to live about the place. One part of the Male Hospital is a complete aviary in itself. Here are canaries of all ages, and many colourings and varieties, sometimes a pair of bullfinches, a couple of cooing doves, and in the corner an old warrior of a cockatoo, a quaint old bird, whose portrait is likely to appear in a future number of the "P.H." These birds are the special care of R— E—, whose sad life, poor fellow, is greatly sweetened by his love for his feathered charges. Others prefer to cater for the wild birds, and sacrifice part of their own meals to feed the sea gulls, which haunt the grounds in their hundreds, along with their black brethren, the crows.

Donald, as you can see from the picture, is happy with his little herd of guineas, which he is allowed to keep in one of the outbuildings at the farm-steading. There he feeds them and cares for them, making them his sole occupation, the only problem and perplexity connected with them being their inconveniently rapid increase, and the difficulty of keeping their numbers within decent and prescribed limit. The pretty little creatures are quite a show with their brown, and white, and tan, and piebald or skewbald colourings and markings. They are tame enough with Donald, whom they know and trust, but amazingly and amusingly timid with strangers, scurrying off to hide in the farthest corners of their little houses at the mere approach of a stranger. Only by the presence of their trusted guardian and friend could the photographer ever have succeeded in getting the pretty picture reproduced on our front page.

M.

FOOTBALL.—SEASON 1913-1914.

The football season opened on 27th September, 1913, Attendant Ritchie again acting as Captain. Twenty three matches were arranged for the season, of which the Asylum won 17, drew 4, and lost 2, scoring 103 goals against 48, a record we can look back to with much pleasure. The visiting teams have on the whole been much stronger than those of

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former years, and it has been my endeavour to get as strong a side as possible to come to the Asylum. Of our two defeats, one was against Larbert Amateurs, and we lost by the odd goal in three; the other defeat was inflicted by the Edinburgh Civil Service 1st XI. on New Year's Day. In this match, after being well beaten in the first half, our team played up so well that by the end of the match we nearly managed to snatch a victory. However, we lost by 3 to 4. Dr. Cairns brought two scratch Edinburgh University XI.'s during the season, each game creating much interest, and we hope to again welcome them here in the future.

The composition of the team has undergone a great change, many old favourites have retired, but it is good to see the new blood taking an interest, and keeping up the traditions of the football club. Attendant Ritchie played in all the matches and skippered the team with judgment, and contributed largely to the pleasant manner in which the games were played. It is difficult to single out names for praise where all played so well and whole-heartedly, therefore I shall avoid comparisons where none are called for. The ground was well cared for by Mr. Ross; and, finally, Mr. Hutton refereed all of our matches willingly, and with his usual agreeable and firm impartiality.

FOOTBALL RESULTS.				GOALS.	
1914.				For S.D.A.	Against.
January	1—Civil Service,	...	...	3	4
"	10—Polmont Amateurs,	...	...	3	2
"	17—East Stirlingshire Amateurs,	...	...	6	2
"	31—Falkirk High School,	...	...	3	3
February	7—Falkirk Orient,	...	...	3	1
"	14—Grangemouth,	...	...	4	4
"	28—Lauriston Villa "A,"	...	...	6	3
March	7—Dunipace Blue Bell,	...	...	6	2
"	21—Inland Revenue,	...	...	3	0
"	28—Dr. Cairn's XI.,	...	...	10	2

Secy. F.C.

BILLIARDS.

During the winter months, two Billiard Competitions were held for the male staff, the one before, the other after, the New Year. Both were handicaps, and it was a pleasure to see such a long list of entries, nearly 40 coming into the first and over 30 into the second. Many of the competitors were complete novices at the game, but, in spite of this, two showed so much keenness that as a result of assiduous practice they improved so greatly with the cue that they secured places on the prize-list, which should be an encouragement to themselves and the others for next season. The games created much interest, and there was always a good attendance of onlookers at each trial of skill, in some cases the accommodation of the room being fully taxed. A prize was given for the winner of the highest break during the second tournament,

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and several competitors were in close competition, so that there was doubt for some time as to where the honour would fall, but eventually Mr. Hutton secured it with a satisfactory total. Prize-list:—

Competition No. I.	Competition No. II.
1, Attendant Brady.	1, Attendant Brady.
2, Attendant M'Kenzie.	2, Mr. Hutton.
3, Mr. Chisholm.	3, Attendant Honey.
4, Mr. Fenton.	4, Attendant M'Leod.

MERRIE MOMENTS—BY SECOND HAND.

Bert—"Are you sure I am the only man you ever really and truly loved?" Maud—"Perfectly sure. I went over the whole list only yesterday."

It worries the raw recruit to think how narrow-chested he is. He's afraid his breast won't be big enough to hold all the medals he expects to win before he dies.

Teacher—"Now, Tommy, if you had ten pennies, and your little brother asked you for half of them, how many would you have left?" Tommy (promptly)—"Ten!"

BIRDS AT S.D.A.

With the vernal of Spring
Comes the carolling of birds,
In the copses they sing
Sweet songs without words,
A-warbling and wooing, a-billing and cooing,
In verdant, reverberant Spring!

Sing on, ye wild warblers,
The winter is gone;
Your hopes and your passions
Expressing, sing on;
A-thrilling and thriving, a-weaving and wiving,
Sing blithely, sing joyfully on!

We love you to sing
Of the summer to come,
Of skies that are clear,
Of hills we may roam,
A-winging and waiting, a-meeting and mating,
O carolling birds of the Spring!

This is a poet's impression of the singing of the birds in spring, and it might well have been written of the grounds of the S.D.A., so apt is the description and meaning of the spring song of the many birds that haunt our precincts. Varied of song and feather are they, and their joyous notes and flutterings to and fro, in their happy work of building, are a constant solace and course of pleasure to many of our inmates. Year after year they return to the same old haunts, bringing more and more in their train, each year seeing some added variety to our already

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large assortment, and the excitement of watching the newcomer weaving and wooing according to its kind. It is amazing to see in what quaint spots and corners they will build their frail little homes, and how timid and yet how bold they become in their absorption over their life's task of nesting and rearing their young ones. For several years running a blackbird built its nest in a straw bag hung on one side of the dog's kennel at the Copse. A swallow builds inside one of the single rooms in the main building. The starlings return regularly to the spars and beams in the roof of the arcade which joins the administrative block to the main building. This year a blackbird built its nest in the curve of a coil of barbed wire which was hung on a nail outside one of the garden sheds.

And strangest visitant of all, this year a woodcock built its nest on the bare ground in a fairly well-frequented corner of the new garden, not far from the patients' walk, her protective colouring of buff and brown harmonising so closely with the earth on which she sat that one could almost have stepped over her without observing her. She laid four eggs, three of which hatched out; and within a few hours of their hatching the mother and two of the young birds disappeared, leaving the third one stark and dead, with what appeared to be a small punctured wound behind its wing. This would seem to be a confirmation of the well-known, but much-debated theory that woodcocks carry their young from one spot to another.

The woodcock is a migratory bird, which usually spends the winter and spring in this country, and leaves for the south about the end of March or beginning of April, but many now remain with us all the year round, nesting in March and April, generally in a copse, in small flocks, not far from marshy ground. They feed chiefly on worms, and are expert grubbers, digging their long sharp beaks into the ground as far as their nostrils, and fetching up a poor, unfortunate worm at every blow. The reason given for the carrying of their young from one place to another is that they find it easier to bring the newly-hatched, hungry, gaping creatures to their food than to carry the food to them, which would be necessary if the nest had been built at some little distance from the kind of marshy ground which provides their particular food.

Our photographer very fortunately succeeded in getting a snapshot of the mother bird just before her final disappearance. The indefinite character of her colouring has interfered with the sharpness of her outline against the background of earth and grass and young trees; but it is a most interesting record of her residence among us, of which a few of us were proud and keenly interested witnesses. M.

ASYLUM NOTES.

The pigeons that inhabit the caves of the Asylum Chapel may be said to have a very private domicile, though it is observed that they are not easily put on flight. They are mostly of the common blue variety, picking up their food in the fields, and are probably joined by others from deserted lofts. Nevertheless, they are tame and unafraid amongst

the patients, and make pretty scenes, in which the photographer has more than once evinced an interest. The bank of the Recreation Park is beginning to be a rendezvous of the outdoor work party. Occasionally a football is in evidence, or at other times tonsorial operations are carried on by the "barbers." It is a peaceful scene as the last rays of the setting sun and long mysterious shadows linger, pointing among the trees where birds are chirping and twittering sleepily. The dark winter is over now. It is behind us—gone. Spring has come with glorious dazzling weather, the air warm and balmy by day, cool and soft by night. Whatever changes may have taken place in the outside world, the Asylum regime has not been altered. It is still in the same old way. But it is a blessing that we are healthy and happy, with the vitality and *joie de vivre* of our birthright.

"Avis."

NEWS.

The Assistant Medical Staff at present includes Drs. C. H. G. Gostwyck, C. P. Carlsson, and Celia M. C. Macneil, with Messrs. P. Chisholm and H. Shaw as Clinical Assistants.

The upper Nursing Staff at present consists of Miss M'Grigor, Matron; Miss Mackay, Deputy Matron; and Sisters Campbell, Rayment, Heron, and Scrimgeour.

The Staff Ball was held on Friday, 3rd January, and was, as usual, a most successful function. Everything—floor, music, and supper—was superlatively good, and the company gay and bright, and there was not a dull moment throughout the whole evening.

On Monday, 5th January, Dr. Seaton, a skilled and experienced conjurer and entertainer from London, gave a very clever exhibition of his powers, and kept the whole audience interested and mystified, greatly to their delight.

On January 22nd Mr. R. Craig Lumsden, who is now quite an institution with us, paid his annual visit, and gave us an evening of Scottish song and story, which was much enjoyed and appreciated.

On 5th February Mr. Brown gave us another cinematograph entertainment. The films were lent by Mr. Faulkner of the local Picture Palaces, but they were unfortunately not of a high standard of clearness, and were therefore somewhat disappointing.

On 13th March Mr. Albert Richmond and company gave a concert, which was good, and well appreciated.

NOTICE.

The Passing Hour now appears as a Quarterly Magazine, and subscribers may have it sent to their addresses post free for One Shilling a year. Orders, subscriptions, and contributions, to be sent to Miss MINA C. MARTIN, House Secretary, Stirling District Asylum, Larbert.