

THEY MUMBLE IN SCHOOLS

VOLUNTARY SCHOOLS IN ENGLAND CRITICIZED.

Facts as to What Is Being Done For the Children of London.

Interesting facts regarding the English school system and its results are contained in a blue book containing the general reports of His Majesty's inspectors of elementary schools and training colleges for the year 1901. The reports of the district inspectors abound in passages of interest. We quote, for example, from the report of Mr. Newton, of the Greenwich district:

"The difficulty of getting London children to speak distinctly is great. The children are naturally inclined to mumble, to gabble, to slur over consonants, and to draw out certain vowels. Our classes are large, and the teacher is often obliged to adopt the plan of simultaneous reading, which covers a great deal of slovenly enunciation. Still, in spite of all difficulties, distinct reading is often obtained—especially in girls' schools. Reading 'with expression' is fortunately not often striven for. The actor and the public speaker may be expected to modulate their voices in accordance with the drift of the passages which they utter, but the proper accord between sound and sense is not reached without much labor. We cannot expect from boys an accomplishment which is obviously beyond the reach of some very experienced speakers. By imitating his teacher's voice a scholar may learn to repeat 'with expression' some particular passage; but this is mere memory work. It is quite another thing to put pathos into the reading of all pathetic passages, and humor into the reading of all humorous passages. Supposing that the reader has imagination to throw himself completely into the spirit of what he reads, the pathetic and humorous tones will, no doubt, be forthcoming when they are wanted, but the imagination of the child is not under the control of the teacher, hence children cannot be made to identify themselves with the characters about which they read. Now and then the dramatic spirit may be awakened, and the expression will appear; but this will only be in exceptional cases."

VOLUNTARY SCHOOLS.

The following criticism from certain voluntary schools is also from the same report:

"During the past two years new partitions have been put in two or three voluntary schools; two or three more partitions may be desirable, but in general the voluntary school premises have now been improved as far as is possible without a complete reconstruction. Some of these buildings are badly planned, and can never be ideal places of instruction; but it may fairly be said that there is no school in which the children cannot be taught efficiently. The crowded state of certain voluntary schools is, however, to be lamented; perhaps in time the managers of these schools may see the propriety of reckoning the accommodation on a more liberal basis than that of eight square feet of floor space per child in average attendance. The infant galleries of some of the older voluntary and board schools are at present the least satisfactory part of our school furniture. The old steep galleries seem to have been designed for the purpose of spreading infectious diseases, for, when the steps are high and narrow, the children on the upper rows have every chance of inhaling any germ which may be exhaled by the children below. The back to the gallery seat is sometimes not a rail, as is suggested in the building rules, but a flat wooden board reaching from the seat to about the level of the children's ears. Such a back must be singularly uncomfortable. Desks which are glaringly at fault are now becoming rare, but all new furniture provided in voluntary schools requires careful inspection, inasmuch as some makers still supply desks which are planned without any regard for the children's health or comfort. The dual desks which the London School Board now provides are flatter at the top than the older dual desks, and are also rather higher above the seats; on the whole, the older desks seem the better suited to the children, but the faults of the new desks are not so great as to make hygienic writing positions impossible."

HEALTH OF CHILDREN.

On the subject of the health of school children, Mr. Graves, His Majesty's Inspector, for the Southwark Division, has the following remarks:

"We have not yet got so far as the Germans in our attention to the health of school children. Our schools are not periodically visited by a medical man with a view of testing their sanitary condition, or with the object of inquiring into the physical state of the scholars, but more is being done in these matters than heretofore. The local authorities are active, some managers think unduly active, in the matter of the adequacy and drainage of the school offices. The School Board authorities advise teachers how to act in the case of epidemics, groups of board and voluntary schools, though I regret not all of them, are regularly visited by nurses, who attend to sore eyes, bad heads, and other temporary ailments, and instruct the

parents how to deal with them; lessons are given by teachers on hygiene tending to promote personal cleanliness, moderation in eating, and due attention to digestion, and children who are found to be shortsighted, after the application of the Board's sight tests, are urged to use glasses, or where their parents refuse, or are too poor to supply them, they are often secured through the kindness of managers or teachers. In this connection it is pleasant to be able to congratulate the London School Board on what they have done in the way of teaching swimming in their schools. A very large proportion of girls, as well as boys, in the Southwark district avail themselves of the tickets admitting them to the swimming classes at the local baths, and the interest in the exercise is fostered by friendly competitions between the different schools, out of which the Southwark children come very successfully. It is, indeed, noticeable how the swimming has improved the physique of these children, and more especially the girls."

USING SOFT COAL.

How to Keep the House Heated Without Anthracite.

Soft coal ignites very quickly, does down with equal facility, and needs constant watching and frequent replenishing to maintain even a measurably constant fire. In these respects it more resembles wood than anthracite, but burns very nearly as well in an anthracite range as in one built for a market where only soft coal is used as a domestic fuel.

In an anthracite-heating furnace soft coal needs to be treated very differently from anthracite, but the difference consists in the management of draughts and checks. In the feed door of every furnace there is a slide damper to admit air over the fire. When anthracite is used this is opened only if it is desired to deaden the fire and lower the temperature of the house. With soft coal it must be left open all the time. The great volume of gases evolved from it in the cooking process, which is the first stage in its combustion, calls for more air than can be had through the body of fuel, and unless this is supplied above the fire the greatest value of the fuel is lost up the chimney in unconsumed gases. Too much air for good combustion can be admitted over the fire, but it is not likely to be the case if the slide damper in the feed door of a furnace built for anthracite is left wide open all the time. The draught opening in the ash pit door, on the other hand, needs to be less widely and continuously open than for anthracite. With the same amount of bottom draught which it is customary to give hard coal, soft coal would simulate the combustion in a blast furnace and call for constant stoking. The householder must also remember that the check draught in the stove pipe, which with anthracite is usually kept open in moderate weather, cannot be opened much, if any, with soft coal, or the house will fill with smoke. The best way is to leave it closed altogether. With the attention to these details, which reverse the customary practice with anthracite, a furnace may be run on bituminous coal so as to keep a house entirely comfortable.

It will be found difficult, if not impossible, to keep either a range or furnace fire over night with soft coal unless one has a watchman on duty to look after it. As an offset to this, however, we have the ease with which a fresh fire of soft coal may be lighted, and its almost instantaneous response in heat-imparting efficiency. It kindles nearly as easily as shavings, and the coke of the previous fire does not have to be removed from the fire pot. All that is necessary is to shake down the fine ash, and make the new fire upon what remains. With a little judgment, one having a small supply of anthracite available, may run his furnace through the day and evening with soft coal, and by adding anthracite at night have a fire in the morning. But with no anthracite at all he can, with a little more trouble than he is accustomed to, keep his house comfortable with soft coal.

CURIOUS WEDDING CUSTOM.

Brides in Alfoeld, Lower Hungary, have been deprived of their wedding gifts by the Government health authorities. It was a custom of the place for brides to wash with soap and to comb the heads of all guests, they in turn throwing coins into the basin. The result, according to the doctors, was the spreading of disease, and an epidemic of ophthalmia led the Government to put a sudden end to the custom.

BURIED TOWNS.

Italy is not the only country that can boast of its buried towns and villages. In Scotland there are the Culbin Sands, covering a large tract of country, under which many dwellings lie entombed; while in Ireland there is the ancient town of Bannone, situated in a once fertile tract between Wexford and Waterford, as effectually covered with sand as ever Pompeii was with red-hot cinders or Herculaneum with lava.

Within the past 90 years the Spanish-speaking population of the world has increased from 26,190,000 to 43,000,000.

LUCK TAKEN FOR BRIDES.

OLD TRADITIONS REGARDING MARRIAGE COLORS.

Bride Who Courted Success by Wearing Stockings With a History.

At a recent wedding the bride wore a pair of blue silk stockings which were loaned to her by Mrs. Charles Freeman, better known as Miss Mary E. Wilkins, thus complying with the conditions of the old superstition compelling a bride, if she wished for luck, to wear something old and something new, something borrowed and something blue.

These particular stockings, says The New York Herald, possessed a history dealing entirely with the old adage, to which brides invariably give heed, notwithstanding the severity of their frowns at childish superstitions upon other and less momentous occasions. The hose were originally presented by Miss Anny Turner to Miss Mary E. Waies, with the understanding that she should wear them when married. But as the wedding of Miss Wilkins, who is a friend of Miss Wales, occurred before the owner of the stockings had a chance to wear them herself, she turned them over to the bride to use upon the happy occasion. Then Miss Wilkins passed them on to this bride, who will in course of time present them to some other bride, doubly lucky in donning stockings twice blessed.

Few brides care to go to the altar without complying with the old adage.

"SOMETHING OLD"

is frequently the wedding veil itself, which, if of good lace, is handed down as an heirloom to be worn by all the brides of the family. "Something new" is hard to get away from, as the garments of a bride are usually of self-evident freshness. "Something borrowed" is easily complied with—a pin, ring or hair pin answering every purpose. "Something blue" is often a pair of silk garters, or a knot of ribbon tucked away amid the laces of the lingerie.

A sure talisman against spinsterhood is said to be the wearing of yellow garters, which have an especial value, the wise ones say, if presented to maidens on Easter Sunday. But should a bride present one of her yellow garters—which have served their purpose in her own case—to a friend, then it is ordained that that lucky individual might as well begin preparations for her own wedding, as it is sure to follow in short order.

A superstitious bride will never entirely don her wedding costume until the time for the ceremony, as to do so is supposed to bring bad luck.

Neither will she allow her prospective husband to see her in bridal array until he meets her at the altar, or as near to that time as can be conveniently managed.

In dressing herself for her wedding the bride must remember to put on her right shoe first if she wishes to have a happy married life.

The wedding ring must be a circlet of gold, signifying endless devotion, and it must not be tried on before the ceremony nor taken from the finger afterward.

No girl will be a happy bride who has not at least in some little particular assisted in the making of her wedding gown or the mixing of

HER BRIDAL CAKE.

There is an ancient rhyme running in this wise:

Married in white,
You have chosen all right.
Married in gray,
You will go far away.
Married in black,
You will wish yourself back.
Married in red,
You'd better be dead.
Married in green,
Ashamed to be seen.
Married in blue,
You'll always be true.
Married in pearl,
You'll live in a whirl.
Married in yellow,
Ashamed of the fellow.
Married in brown,
You'll live out of town.
Married in pink,
Your spirits will sink.

If a bride be very thoughtful and also superstitious she carries a rabbit's foot somewhere about her when married.

May used to be regarded as a desperately unlucky month for weddings, but as it comes at the loveliest season of the year, custom and convenience have banished superstition and now the evil ban is said to be removed.

In the selection of a day, it is interesting to remember the old rhyme which says:

Monday for health,
Tuesday for wealth,
Wednesday the best day of all!
Thursday for crosses,
Friday for losses,
Saturday no luck at all.

It is considered unlucky to change the date of a wedding after it once has been determined upon, and for that reason many ceremonies are performed under adverse circumstances sooner than suffer an alteration of the plans.

ALL BRIDES REJOICE

when the wedding day is a bright one, for they remember the oft-quoted line, "Happy is the bride, that the sun shines on." If the maiden to be wed can squeeze out a

few tears on her wedding day—and this is not usually difficult—it is said to insure her future happiness.

It is an old custom for the bride to cut the first slice from her wedding-cake. This cake must invariably contain a ring, which will signify a speedy marriage to the lucky person finding it.

The bridesmaid who catches the bride's bouquet will be the first one of the guests to be married. It must be remembered, though, that "thrice a bridesmaid, never a bride."

It is also said that no maiden who desires to be wed ever should sit upon a table, as this unconventional resting place will prove a bar to matrimony.

ALL ABOUT WATCHES.

Few Realize How Minute Parts of Time-pieces Are.

"Much in little" can be said more truly of a first-class watch than of almost any other product of human ingenuity and industry. The watch one carries in his pocket—unless it is of the cheapest "pocket clock" variety—has in its movement more than 150 parts, and this number does not include the case which holds the movement.

A glance at the movement is enough to show that most of its parts are very small, but one can scarcely realize how minute some of them are. Take, for example, the numerous screws which hold the parts together. Some of them are so tiny that it takes nearly 150,000 of them to weigh a pound. One must use a good microscope to see the threads in these screws, and each of the threads must be absolutely perfect and true, or the screw is useless.

There are screws in a small-sized watch, such as women usually carry, which have a thread of 260 to the inch. The weight of one of these screws is one one hundred and thirty-thousandth of a pound.

The diameter of the pivot of the balance wheel in a watch is only one two-hundredth of an inch, and pivots are classified by a gauge which measures down to one ten-thousandth of an inch. The jewel hole into which the pivot fits is one five-thousandth of an inch larger than the pivot, so that the latter may have sufficient play.

Jewels in a watch movement are cut from slabs of garnet, ruby or sapphire, one-fiftieth of an inch thick. Then they are "surfaced," drilled through the center, and on the convex side a depression is made for an oil cup. A pellet jewel, finished and in use, weighs one one hundred and fifty-thousandth of a pound, while the weight of a roller jewel is a fraction more than one two hundred and fifty-six thousandth of a pound.

The largest hairspring stud is four one-hundredths of an inch in diameter and nine one-hundredths of an inch in length.

To make the complete movement of a good watch more than 3,700 different processes are employed. It takes about five months to complete a single watch of the best grade, but as all the processes are carried on simultaneously the finished product is turned out continuously by the manufacturers.

The balance in a modern watch must make 18,000 vibrations every hour. A change of only one beat will cause the watch to gain or lose four and four-fifths seconds in twenty-four hours. Think of the wonderfully delicate mechanism and equally delicate adjustment that puts together more than 150 pieces of almost microscopic size and turns out a watch that will not vary one second in twenty-four hours.

A CHINAMAN'S OATH.

A novel scene was witnessed in West Hartlepool police court during the hearing of a case in which forty Chinese seamen were interested. One of them was called as a witness, and in order that he might be sworn in the orthodox fashion of his country he was given a saucer which he had to break on the witness-box. The clerk said to him: "You shall tell the truth, the whole truth, and if you do not tell the truth your soul shall be cracked like the saucer."

HOW SMOKE IS UTILIZED.

In Brussels, Malines, and other Belgian towns a novel method of not only getting rid of smoke, but turning it to good account, has recently been employed. The smoke is driven by a ventilating fan into a filter filled with porous material, over which a continuous stream of petroleum, benzine, alcohol, or some liquid hydrocarbon flows. The result is that the smoke is entirely suppressed, while the filter yields a gas of great heating power, which can be used for domestic purposes and for driving gas engines. The filtering material itself also becomes a good combustible during the process.

MADE A NAME.

"So you are married?" said a man to a friend.
"Oh, yes. Married over a year ago."
"Given up all your ideas about fame and glory and all that sort of thing?"
"No, sir. I always said I would make a name in the world."
"Yes."
"Well, I've done it."
"Indeed?"
"Yes. I superintended the christening of our baby last week."

THE ROMANCE OF LONDON

LIFE AND DEATH IN THE GREAT METROPOLIS.

Marriages Are More Numerous While Births Show a Decreasing Rate.

The true romance of London is revealed in the 800 pages of statistics just issued by the London county council. The story of the growth and present position of the capital there told is more striking than any fiction. London has reached a point when it has ceased to be a city, but has become an undivided mass of cities. Greater London now contains 6,581,372 people, nearly twice as many as its nearest rival, Greater New York. If Paris, Berlin and Chicago, the three cities that come next, were grouped together, they would not approach it. It has as many inhabitants as Belgium or Morocco, and nearly half as many more as the whole of Portugal, or Ireland, or Scotland.

Once the city of London comprised its boundaries. Now, for every forty people in the city itself there are 10,000 Londoners living outside. The increase of population in ten years amounted to 950,000, or more than the total population of Dublin, Edinburgh, and Bristol combined.

BIRTH RATE IS FALLING.

The limit is not yet reached. The figures on which the calculations in the return are prepared cover only the administrative County of London, with a population of 4,500,000. The outer belt, containing over 2,000,000, does not come within the county council's survey. In administrative London an abnormal state of affairs prevails. Marriage rate birth rate, and death rate are all below the average.

There has been a decided improvement in recent years in the marriage rate for London. In 1894 it reached its lowest point, 17 per 1,000. In 1899, the last year for which figures are given, it was 18.4 per 1,000. The birth rate does not show a corresponding increase. It is now at the lowest point it has ever touched. Thirty years ago it was 35.4 per 1,000; in 1899 it has sunk to 29.3. In this matter the state of affairs in London corresponds in a surprising degree to the whole country, where the fall has been on parallel lines.

POOR CLASSES MOST PROLIFIC

The two poorest districts, St. Luke's and Bethnal Green, are proportionately the most prolific. St. Martin's in the Fields, Kensington Hampstead, and St. George's Hanover square are the least. There are over four times as many births, proportionately, in St. Luke's as in St. George's.

The death rate is now 20.6 per thousand, an increase over the three previous years. London still ranks among the most healthy of great cities, although it cannot yet approach the Amsterdam average of 15.3. If the greater registration district of London is taken, the crude death rate is only 19.3.

The figures give abundant proof that under better sanitary conditions the death rate in London would be lower. The fewer in the houses the fewer the deaths. Nearly two-thirds as many more people of all ages die in over-crowded tenement quarters as in suburban districts. The death rate from consumption is highest in St. Luke's and in Southwark, and lowest in Hamstead.

PAUPERISM AND CRIME.

Pauperism shows a tendency to decrease and crime has diminished with the exception of drunkenness which is making rapid strides. Out of every 100,000 people 537 were arrested for drunkenness in 1890. In 1899 the proportion had risen to 846. This was no temporary matter, but part of a steady upward growth.

The total of paupers is appalling. Twenty-one per cent. of the entire population over 65 years old are in receipt of poor relief. On Jan. 1, 1901, 123,520 were being given public charity either as indoor or outdoor paupers, vagrants, or lunatics.

The police give returns showing the number of bad characters at large known to them, but these are declared to be of doubtful value. The police give the number of thieves a large as 815, the persons under police supervision, 1,155, and the houses of receivers of stolen goods 101.

INCREASE OF INSANITY.

The total of lunatics for whom the county of London has to find accommodation has increased over 50 per cent in twelve years. In 1891 it was 10,104, in 1901 it was 15,511. The total number of lunatics in London in 1901 was 21,848.

The returns of the fire brigade will be read with painful interest. The figures only cover 1900, although those for 1901 have been available for many months. In that year seventy-four persons lost their lives and of these deaths, to quote the report, "a large majority occurred before the fire brigade was even called." The list of deaths is more notably followed by such remarks as "Call not received till more than three hours after the occurrence of the fire." No suggestion is made that the condition of things which renders such late calls possible is far from satisfactory.

Nicolo Piccinni, born in Naples in 1728, produced the record number of 134 operas during his lifetime.