CURRENT TOPICS.

There has been an immense amount of writing about Dickens of late years that adds to the unconscious humor of the superior critic who once asked with a somewhat contemptuous pity for the neglected author: "Who reads Dickens now?" Dickens was read then, is read to-day and will continue to be read by many thousands of people in all parts of the world because he has qualities that amuse and delight and stir the hearts of men. The superior critic who dwells on his faults is simply a poor judge. We should advise any young person who is affected by the pretense of superiority to turn to some of the passages in Dickens' novels that are referred to by George Barlow in an article on the genius of the author which appears in The Contemporary Review. They are an answer that makes the critic shrivel to his true proportions.

Mr. Barlow speaks particularly of the tragic side of the genius of Dickens. He suggests a resemblance to the old Elizabethan tragic playwrights. Besides the laughter that rings through Dickens' stories there is "an understanding of the intensest agonies of life, a power to penetrate into the abysmal darkness that sometimes encompasses human souls, a comprehension not only of the heights which human beings may attain, but of the depths to which they may sink, which brings Dickens more within the pale of Ford or Webster than within the regions traversed by other English writers." Scenes given to illustrate Mr. Barlow's meaning are those leading to the death of James Carker, the flight of Lady Dedlock, the murder of Nancy Sikes. Many others might be added as proof of a dramatic intensity that goes far beyond dramatic tricks and that is clearly distinguished from cleverness in the construction of exciting plots. This tremendous power has been equaled in few authors, and it is pretty secure against the competition of the future.

But Mr. Barlow's judgment on the relative merits of Dickens' books is curious. The "colossal" productions are "Dombey and Son," "Bleak House" and "David Copperfield." The two works last named have a high rank undoubtedly, but "Dombey" has been denounced with extraordinary bitterness in spite of the fact that it contains some of the author's most widely known characters. The same may be said of "Little Dorrit," which Mr. Barlow is tempted to call the very best of Dickens' works from the artistic point of view. But, however much opinions may differ on this question of comparative merit, the significant fact remains that every one of the books contains something that is worth knowing and having. The evidence of genius is in them all.

LEAVING THE OLD FOLKS.

Yes, wife, I guess we're gettin' old,
but don't you take on so.
Come, dry your eyes an' try to
think 'twas right that she should
go;
Of course the house is solemn-like
an' still, but if you mind
Your mother suffered jes' the same
when you left her behind;
Her mother must have felt it, too,
for since the world was known,
Young folks have married off an'
left th' old folks all alone.

Come! come! don't sob as though
all joy had vanished from your
life,
'Twas right that she should do it;
God meant her for a wife;
Of course we'll miss her smiling
face an' miss her words of cheer,
And oft when supper time is done,
we'll wish that she was here
To sing those simple songs again,
th' way she did before
He came into her life an' led her
smilin' from the door.

An' I—I'll miss her, too, because
when my day's work is through
I'll like to see her come to me, the
way she used to do,
Bringing my slippers to the fire an'
kneelin' by my chair
To put 'em on, the while I stroke
her wreath of golden hair.
An' then I'll think her husband gets
the favors that were mine,
An' those are perquisites of love
it's hardest to resign.

But wife, don't sigh an' take on
so, it's mighty plain to me
You're thinkin' of the days gone by
when she played about your knee;
Jes' recollect she's grown up now,
it's right that she should go,
An' though it's hard on us at times
our grief we shouldn't show;
An' while we're sittin' here tonight
my only wish is she
Will be as good a wife to him as
you have been to me.

THE WILL OF THE FATHER

It Is the Handwriting of the Infinite on the Pages of Eternity

"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."—Matt. vi., 10.

Is that the prayer of craven submission? It might be, but for the first sentence of the petition. He who talks to his Father and knows the affection of that infinite fatherhood will know that there can be nothing higher or better for him than that Father's will; that this will may be perfectly done will be more than a petition, it will become the supreme passion in life.

This is not the cry of one who says: "Let God's will be done because it is inevitable; he is almighty, I am impotent before him," but the cry of one who says: "Let his will be done because it is best." Not in submission but in aspiration does one thus pray who has caught the spirit of this prayer.

There seemed something noble and admirable in rebellion against the will of the Deity so long as we thought of him as a person who, in arbitrary fashion, decided what we must do, as one who used his omnipotence for our subjugation, while he seemed to be a coward who bowed his neck in tame submission to decrease and obligations imposed upon him by one who sat in foreign splendor in another world.

Even heaven appeared dull and uninteresting as long as it was pictured as the place where people neither would nor could do any other than

THE DIVINE DECREES.

Law-abiding communities are attractive, but there would seem to be little morality or merit where the laws were mechanically obeyed without the possibility of infraction.

But if we think of the will of this Father as being infinite law that runs through all the universe, as that which the least atom and the vast planets obey, as that law of harmony which means fullness and beauty of life, then the constant hope of every heart and endeavor of every right life is to do that will, to be in tune with that universal harmony.

The will of heaven is not written on tables of stone, nor can it be set down in books, nor compassed in prescription and regulations. The infinite, divine will is not subject to the interpretation of every passing regulator of the conduct of others. It is the mighty intent which runs through the ages of all the universe.

It is a dreary and irksome business trying to do the divine will by discovering directions for the specific duties and problems of every day. It is a childish way of living. It creates prigs and bigots. We need to catch some broad principles of living; we need, most of all, some high, impelling vision that shall lead the life on, direct, unfaltering, through every difficulty, doubt and fear, to a worthy, heavenly goal.

THE WILL OF THE FATHER

is not this or that or the other detail. We do his will not by the scrupulous observance of any round or routine of ritual or duties. He is doing the will of God who is making the dust the servant of the divine, who is setting the soul above the sod, who is bringing the kingdom and rule of the spiritual to this world. Here is the determinative, dominating principle, that ever the life shall live toward the things higher, holiest.

The will of the divine is that, since we are his children, we shall all come more and more to the family likeness and to the freedom and fullness of the divine life; it is the spiritualizing, making heavenly and divine all our life. We who pray that prayer must pay its price, we must set character, the heavenly likeness before any other subject or desire.

Such a prayer subdues our individual desires to its high purposes. It teaches us to see in pain the perfecting of the life for the purposes of divine affection; it sees in losses the cutting away of that which might load the life down and prevent its moving in harmony with all developing life into the heavenly glory of character.

HENRY F. COPE.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

INTERNATIONAL LESSON, DEC. 6.

Lesson X. Solomon Chooses Wisdom. Golden Text, Prov. 9. 10.

Verse 4. Gibeon—Identified by scholars with the modern village of el-Jib, which lies five or six miles northwest of Jerusalem. In earlier times it was one of the principal Hivite cities, and one of a group which through deception had effected a league with Joshua (Josh. 9. 3-17), thereby escaping the fate of Ai and Jericho. It was afterward allotted to Benjamin and made a Levitical town. For a time the tabernacle had rested here, and from Jer. 41. 16, it seems that after the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar Gibeon again became the seat of the government.

The great high place—One of the principal centres of worship for the ten tribes. Only gradually was the worship of Israel centralized at Jerusalem.

Burnt offerings—The burnt offering was one in which the entire victim consumed upon the altar. It symbolized the entire surrender to God of the individual or the congregation, for whom it was offered. The animals prescribed for this sacrifice were a young bullock, a lamb, or goat (always a male), or in cases of poverty, turtle doves or young pigeons (Lev. 1. 3, 10, 14). The ritual of this sacrifice is described in part in Lev. 1. 14-17, and 7. 8.

6. As he walked before thee in truth and in righteousness—Solomon did not fail to trace the prosperity of his father, David, to the fact that the latter had been a faithful servant of Jehovah.

A son to sit on his throne—The perpetuation of the Davidic dynasty was accounted the greatest of all blessings.

7. But a little child—Young and inexperienced in statecraft, Solomon appeared to himself as a mere child in view of the varied great responsibilities which his new position as a ruler placed upon him.

Go out or come in—The Hebrew way of referring to the general comportment or behavior of a person.

8. A great people that cannot be numbered—No accurate or reliable census of the Jewish nation at this time is available. Solomon's statement, however, was that of an inexperienced ruler who would, naturally exaggerate the extent of duties and cares which he had not yet encountered.

9. Understanding — Hebrew, "Hearing." The sense of the clause is, "A readiness to hear complaints and wisdom to judge the people rightly."

Great people—Literal, "heavy," referring, not to greatness in our sense, but to immensity involving a correspondingly heavy burden of responsibility.

10. The speech pleased the Lord—The element in Solomon's choice which makes it pleasing to God is his perception of the supreme importance of wisdom and discretion in government as contrasted with external greatness or military glory. In later years, however, the king lost his simplicity of purpose and purity of aspiration, becoming enamored with the glory of outward display.

12. An understanding heart—Perhaps better, "a discerning mind."

13. There shall not be—Hebrew, "There hath not been," as in the preceding verse. The sense of the clause thus becomes, "There has not been any among the kings as prosperous as thou shalt be for all thy days."

14. Walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments — Compare the similar charge in 1 Kings 2. 2-4.

As thy father did—David's life had not been faultless, but the general attitude of his heart and mind toward the commandments of Jehovah had been right, and, on the whole, he had sought conscientiously to obey the statutes and commandments of his God.

15. Behold, it was a dream—The dream in this case, however, had the same influence over Solomon as an actual experience of the same import would have had.

The ark of the covenant—This had been brought by David to Jerusalem and had found a permanent resting place on Mount Zion.

Offered up burnt offerings — As at Gibeon, so at Jerusalem, the king offers up sacrifices indicative of the consecration of himself to the high office of ruler over the people.

Peace offerings—These differed from the burnt offerings in that only certain portions of the animal sacrificed were burned upon the altar. A portion of the meat was given to the officiating priest, while the other portion was returned to the person bringing the offering, and was used by him in the sacrificial feast which usually accompanied the ceremony. So in connection with the peace offering here mentioned the king made a feast to all his servants.

A gentleman who was no longer young, and who never was handsome, said to a child in presence of her parents: "Well, my dear, what do you think of me?" The little one made no reply, and the gentleman continued: "Well, you don't tell me. Why won't you?" Two little fat hands tucked the corners of a pinafore into her mouth, as she said, archly, in a timid whisper: "'Cause I don't want to be whipped."

CANKERS ON APPLE TREES.

Doing an Alarming Amount of Damage to Orchards.

Many Ontario apple growers have complained that an unusually large number of branches are dying on their older apple trees and not a few of the younger trees have been killed outright. The trouble has usually been attributed to Sun-Scald and Oyster-Shell Scale. Investigations this autumn, however, have shown that the greater part of such damage can be traced to Cankers, caused either by a fungus disease known as Black Rot or a bacterial disease known as Pear Blight, Fire Blight, or Twig Blight. The Black Rot attacks also the leaves and fruit, causing the latter to rot. On the surface of the rotten fruit little black pustules or pimples almost one-third the size of a pin-head appear after a time. These pimples contain spores which when set free are carried by the wind from tree to tree and help spread the disease in the summer. Either kind of canker may cause diseased areas on the trunk and large branches or at the main crotch. It is not easy to tell in every case to which disease a canker is due.

A Blight Canker, however, often begins by attacking a water-sprout and running down it into the trunk, crotch or main branch and forming a large dead area there. This time of year such areas caused by Blight are usually distinctly marked off from the healthy bark by a crack between the two, and by the diseased bark being darker brown in color than the healthy bark and slightly shrunken. As a rule the surface of Blight Cankers is fairly smooth, not rough, checked or blackened and is free from pimples except in old cankers where other diseases have got in and caused these.

The Black Rot Canker, on the other hand is, as a rule, not distinctly marked off by a crack between it and the healthy bark. The central part, especially if more than a year old, is usually somewhat swollen and the bark is rough, black and checked. On part of the smoother surface there will nearly always be found numerous little black pimples or pustules about one-third the size of the head of a pin. These are the places where spores are produced that spread the disease in the spring of the year.

Both kinds of cankers may live over from year to year and continue to increase in size. This is especially true of Black Rot Canker, though often this as well as the other may die out at the end of the first year. The diseased area may be small in either kind or again it may include the whole of the trunk and part of the branches, or may run for several feet along a single branch. In old trees only the branches are attacked.

Remedies—Where a tree is too badly attacked to give any hope of its recovery it should be cut down and burned as soon as possible, for otherwise the disease will spread from it even though the tree itself be dead. In the same way dead or dying branches should be cut off and burned either this fall or early next spring, taking particular pains to see that the cut is made several inches below any trace of the diseased area. All cuts thus made should be disinfected in the manner described below and then painted. If this is done the frost will not injure them. Wherever a healthy stub is left after cutting off the cankered part of a branch it can be cut afresh in the spring and grafted.

Where the cankered areas are not too large, especially on the trunk and crotches, they should be neatly cut out with a knife or some sharp instrument until the healthy bark is reached. The wounds thus made must be disinfected and painted with white lead (free from turpentine). The painting should be repeated next spring to make sure that no disease gets into the wounds. The best disinfectant to use is corrosive sublimate of the strength of one part of this substance by weight to one hundred parts of water. Any druggists will supply the substance and explain how to make it up. The material will cost only a few cents. A wooden or glass vessel must be used instead of iron or tin as the substance will corrode these. Corrosive sublimate is deadly poison when taken internally, so care must be taken not to allow anything to drink the liquid, and to wash thoroughly the vessel before using it for any other purposes. The best way to disinfect the wound with corrosive sublimate is simply to tie a little sponge or a small pad of cloth on the end of a stick, and, after dipping it into the liquid, wash over the surface of the wound. This will kill any kind of worm whatever.

To ward off cankers for the future it is necessary (1) to prevent as far as possible injury to trees by such means as tearing off the bark by whiffletrees or other implements, or by boots in climbing. If wounds are made in this way, they should be disinfected and painted at once; otherwise they let in the germs of the disease. Cankers usually start from wounds of some kind, though sometimes these may be very small. Sun-Scald injuries also allow Canker germs to enter, hence young trees should be protected against Sun-Scald by some one of the well-known devices for this purpose.

2. Water-sprouts should be kept off the trunks and main branches, because, as said above, the Blight disease often runs down one of these and starts the canker below. A few minutes will usually suffice to remove all the water-sprouts from any ordinary tree.

3. The trees must be carefully sprayed with Bordeaux mixture, and special pains taken to see that the trunks and main branches are thoroughly covered with Bordeaux. The first spraying should be done just before the leaf buds burst, the second a few days before the blossoms open, and the third within a week after most of the blossoms have fallen. Half a pound of Paris Green should be added to each barrel of Bordeaux and the whole kept well agitated while spraying. The spraying will then not only do a great deal to keep off cankers, but will also kill most of the Codling Moths (which cause the wormy apples), the Cigar Case-bearers, Pistol Case-bearers, Canker Worms, Bud Moyjs and many other insects; and in addition will keep the apples free from scab, so that orchardists should thus get a return for the time and money spent in the form of healthier trees and more and better fruit. Care should be taken in every case to see that the spraying is thoroughly done at the times mentioned. Orchards that are kept properly pruned and sprayed have been found to be very much less affected with canker than those that are neglected.

L. CAESAR.

Agricultural College, Guelph.

NEVER GO INTO DEBT FOR A PLEASURE.

Face Your Limitations and Then Get the Best Out of Things.

The price that we pay for pleasures should have something more than a few moments' thought devoted to it, for it has serious results. Without question the more simple the pleasure, the healthier its enjoyment, the oftener it may be indulged in and the happier you will be in the end. Pleasures recreate us—that is, make us over anew—in all parts of our being, and when we indulge in any that degrade and do not elevate us; when they leave us unfitted for the work or duty to which life has assigned us; when they make us conform to a habit at variance with our consciences; when they wound another or influence a life weaker than our own, causing it to stumble in the path of right-doing, they are the forbidden fruits for us and have attached to them a price too heavy for us to pay, and which the remorse of a whole lifetime could not liquidate.

Never be willingfi to go into debt for a pleasure. It's only the shadow of a good time—a foolish dream with a dread awakening back of it. It's often hard to go without, but the sweetest joy that comes to us, that builds and re-creates us every minute of the day, is the joy of a peaceful heart and mind "content with small means," and unwilling to destroy its serenity for a phantom of pleasure. Take up your financial limitations joyously, and make them give you back some inner sweetness for the deprivations they force upon you.

Study your environment and see where your limitations lie and then do not be afraid to face them. Say to yourself, "I can allow so much for this, so much for that," and then adjust your needs and your wants to these restrictions. There is no one so brave, so truly noble, as the woman facing the world upon a small income, courageously, cheerfully, and with the determination of getting the best, the right kind of "the best," out of the conditions that surround her. — New Idea Woman's Magazine.

LONDON FACTORY GIRLS.

Are Most Interesting Type of Working Women in England.

The most interesting type of working women in England are the factory girls. Some of the largest factories in London are in the east and west central districts in the heart of the London slums. These girls generally are recognized by their cockney swagger and their large, black hats trimmed with squally feathers. They are lean and gaunt looking a most common expression is exhaustion and despair. The average wages paid these girls is $2.50 a week. Their home life is no better than the factories they work in. Their homes are cheap and coarse, and though not proud of their parents, they are dutiful daughters. They do their share to help support the large families and usually put part of their savings into clubs, which exist in many of the large factories. They have such titles as Feather Club, Boot Club, and Dress Club, and though the money is deposited each week, every dollar is spent before the holidays.

Blobbs—"There seems to be a strange affinity between a colored man and a chicken." Slobbs—"Naturally. One is descended from Ham and the other from eggs."

Manager—"My stock-in-trade is brains." Principal Girl—"You've got a funny-looking sample case."

YOUNG FOLKS

UNCLE NED'S MAGIC.

Patter, patter, drip, drip, sang the rain on the roof. Tearfully Teddy glanced from the window.

"Oh dear!" he sighed.

"O dear!" echoed Frank and Betty.

"Guess daddy couldn't make a fire on the rocks to-day," said Frankie, with pictures of the intended corn roast vividly before him. This is very evident by the sudden downpour which followed his remarks. Even sight of the lake was shut out from him.

It isn't such an easy thing to amuse two eager little boys and a little girl on a rainy day. Sailing boats in the bathtub was fast becoming tiresome. A sudden gust of wind rattled the windows, and the children did not know that somebody had opened the door and was standing right behind them, and they did not know, either, that that somebody was Uncle Ned.

The children had not seen Uncle Ned for a long time, so of course they were very glad to see him, and just at the right time, too. Somehow uncles always happen to come at just the right time, so it was not any wonder that he was besieged with kisses, and coaxed to tell a story. Truthfully Uncle Ned gazed at the logs in the fireplace.

"I'll tell you, chums," he said, prompted by a sudden idea, "let's have another magic trick, and this shall be called the 'Russian Mountains.' And now I'll get the things necessary."

While the children were gathering round the table uncle returned with a small kerosene lamp, a strip of paper about four inches wide and about three feet long, a glass of water a teaspoon and a small plate. These he placed on the table, while from the long bookcase he selected four books, decreasing in size from a very large to a tiny book.

He lighted the lamp and held the strip of paper over the top near enough so that it soon became covered with thick, greasy lampblack. Then on the backs of the books, which he had stood upright and about four inches apart, he pinned the paper, the greasy side toward him, allowing the end nearest the tiny book to rest in the plate.

"Now, then," said Uncle Ned, "we are ready," and taking a little water in the teaspoon, he let it fall drop by drop upon the paper.

"Gracious!" said Frankie. "Just see how it rolls!" and sure enough one after another the tiny drops rolled down the inclined plane of the book, gaining speed enough each time to mount the next, and so on into the plate.

The children each in turn dropped some water on the paper, and watched with delight the tiny drops striving to see which could gain the plate in the quickest time. It was near supper-time when they thought to look out of the window and what a surprise greeted them! The rain had ceased, the dark lowering clouds had gone, and the sun was shining bright and clear. The next day they could have their picnic, and a much better time because they would have Uncle Ned with them.—Youth's Companion.

JAP GIRLS IN SHOPS.

Girls Don't Like Drudgery of Household Service.

In Japan to-day, as in this country, girls prefer the independence offered by situations in spinning and weaving mills, in shop and factory, to the drudgery and dependence of household service, especially to hiring themselves out as maids of all work, with the various attendant restraints and hardships, to the average middle or lower-class Japanese family of less than a moderate income. The rural districts of Japan always have been the great source of supply from which domestics have been recruited, but since industrial enterprises of one kind and another have been started throughout the country, the young girls who would have drifted to the cities and towns in quest of places as domestics now go to tend spindle and loom.

The reason for this revolution is twofold. In the first place, the position occupied by the servant in the household under the feudal system is rapidly becoming a thing of the past. In the second place, young women and girls who once went into service for purposes of social education and refinement now choose to gain a more up-to-date culture in the schools where branches of knowledge are taught or in the reading of western books rather than to acquire old-fashioned ideals in homes where they might still be imbibed by those willing to enter them in the inferior capacity of maids.

Sir John Banks, physician in Ireland to the King, has bequeathed $25,000 to Louisa Latterman, companion to himself and his late wife in recognition of her devotion to them. He also left $500 each to his butler and his cook, and $250 to his coachman.