# CURRENT COMMENT

### A QUESTION OF ART.

A discussion is going on in England over the use of German articles, the reading of German literature, the production of German plays, the admission of German manufactures, the reception of German people and the recognition of the German nation. There are still many whose personal sufferings, or whose patriotic favor will not permit them to have anything to do with anything German, now, or for a long period to come, if ever. Many are perplexed as to how long the boycott should remain. Others accept the peace declaration by the nation as an official end of all hostilities, though not necessarily the beginning of former cordiality. There are Irish people similarly moved to disclaim their nationality on account of the inhuman things that are being done. But shall we cease to sing Moore's melodies or to read Charles Leold because Satan has moved from Germany to Ireland? The debate in England has been stimulated over the playing in Westminster Abbey of a composition by Max Reger, the German who hoped that the zeppelins would destroy the abbey. The organist played the piece at a concert in aid of the fund for the preservation and restoration of the Abbey. Max Reger is dead, but his good work survives in spite of his lower mind and its evil thoughts. Those who object to listen to German music became its composer or the Kaiser was a scoundrel, more or less, are in the same class as those who refuse to sing the hymn "Nearer, My God, to Thee!" because its anauthor was a Unitarian; or the hymn "Lead, Kindly Light," because its writer afterwards joined the Roman Catholic church. Great works of art and literature rise far above the petty limitations we set for our personal and national prejudices, and it is the merit and glory of art that it does lift us into serener and loftier regions than those in which our temporal and mortal antipathies survive. It was the special mark of the beast in the Germans during the war that they could not recognize the nobler appeals of art, and the same debasement characterizes the acts by which Bolshevism and some other kindred tendencies seek to perpetuate themselves.

### DEATH STRUGGLE IN PLANTS.

Sir Jagadis Chunder Bose has so frequently proven himself a magician in dealing with the mysteries of nature that no surprise need be felt at another of his discoveries in which he demonstrated the exact moment when death occurred in plants. He did this in two ways; one by a delicate instrument called a monograph, by which when it was attached to the plant the slightest movements could be registered by a spot of light. This indicated a spasm or death-throes at the moment when the plant ceased to live, at which life could no longer be prolonged in it. The galvanometer was also used for the same purpose and the results were similar, showing that the electrical response was vigorous when life was full and strong, and correspondingly weak as life failed. The resisting power was shown to lessen under repeated attacks as in the case in animal life. A plant which normally died at a certain temperature, died at a lower temperatures after having been subjected to several exhausting strains. Seedlings succumbed more rapidly than full-grown plants. Anesthetics were also applied and exactly similar results were indicated as in the case of animal life, the monograph showing the action of the anesthetic, ether being used on a mimosa,, at a certain stage, and later the real death-spasm occurring. All these experiments deal with the phenomena of life, but what life itself is, is a secret as profound as war. No man of science can say what is life, nor what is heat or fire, or electricity, or gravity, or chemical action or any of the forces with which we are familiar only through their action of our plane of existence. We may afford these forces channels for their manifestation, and we can invite their presence, and they are amazingly responsive and obedient to suitable conditions, but what they are we can no more say that we can say what space and duration and motion are, or consciousness itself.

### A WORLD REVOLUTION PLANNED.

Lenine's view that the Russian revolution is not an end in itself but is to be regarded as the first step towards world revolution should not be passed over lightly. It is astonishing what few determined men relying on their own nerve and the indifference of the mass of men can do. Witness Ireland, in which a majority of the population are opposed to murder and assassination but will not interfere to stop what they disapprove. The rest of the world is no better organized on an average than Ireland, and if Lenine can extend his agencies, mere apathy would be enough to give him domination. Lenine declares that Britain and France must be attacked through their colonies and dependencies. "As regards France," he explains, "by judicious propaganda in Northern Africa, and in the case of Great Britain by similar propaganda in India." The French have already discovered the symptoms in Northern Africa. Ghandi is carrying on the work of sedition in India. There is no doubt of what is afoot in Ireland. At any moment all these conditions may become acute. In the absence of an international tribunal with an army to enforce its decrees it is impossible to say what kind of situation may not develop at any moment and become acute. Lenine expects to "smash the peace of Versailles and replace the rule of the Entente Powers by the rule of the proletariat throughout the world." The rule of the proletariat means the rule by brute force, and with the absence of education, experience, religion or morals. The first thing done is to suppress all free speech, free thought, free printing as treasonable to the republic. This is brought about by shooting down or otherwise disposing of the cultured and educated classes, the intelligentsia, and you, dear reader, and we who write would be among the first to go.

### THE BATTLE OF JUTLAND.

Since the publication of the private letter of Admiral Van Scheer to the Kaiser written after the battle of Jutland, there has been a complete re-examination of all the evidence and details of that action with the result that the old verdict has been reaffirmed. Whatever may have been the verdict rendered on special aspects of this last great naval battle the Germans were so completely out-rated that they never showed fight again but kept their ships in harbor, and completely surrendered at the close of the war. If this be victory Germany history may boast of it. Criticism has been chiefly levelled at Admiral Jellicoe for not having followed up his advantage, and continuing a night pursuit utterly routed or destroyed the enemy. Jellicoe, however, played safe. Having put the enemy to flight he adopted Dayberry's tactics and thanked God he was rid of a knave. The admiralty has hastened the publication of Jellicoe's report since Van Scheer's letter appeared, and there are one or two new points, particularly the fact that the essential message from a scout boat announcing the direction of the retiring German fleet was lost in the confusion of wireless messages. The low visibility, the strength of the enemy's torpedo fleet and the proximity of the enemy mine field were sufficient reasons to justify a cautious course. There are several admissions which indicate that as usual the enemy was underestimated. His armoring was more efficient, his speed was much above anticipation, his gunfire was excellent and accurate, and his manoeuvres seamanlike. But he dared not face the full force of the British navy and making the best of the confusion following the loss of the Queen Mary, the Marlborough and other vessels, he escaped to his haven whence he sailed not forth again except to surrender.

### CANADA AND THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

Canada has proven as influential at the council board as she was potent in the battle-field. There is no doubt that the impression made among the nations at the meeting of the League of Nations has given her a position in the front rank. Her decisions have not only been sensible and reasonable, but they have been independent ,and they have been supported with a courage, a dignity and an eloquence which commanded respect and even enthusiam. The banquet tendered by the South American nations to Canada was a spontaneous tribute of which any country might have been proud. The Emir Zoa ed Dowleh, representing Persia declared that of all in the assembly Mr. Rowell most accurately voiced the thoughts and wishes of the ancient kingdom. This may be remembered in days to come. Sir George Foster, whose marriage during the meeting was a social event, and Hon. Mr. Doherty both made a splendid impression and Canada has received an unequalled introduction on the stage of world politics. The admission of Albania to the League was carried by Mr. Rowell's eloquent plea. In this Canada was in agreement with the mother country which was by no means the case in other issues. She opposed the technical Commissions, for instance; she obtained representation on the International High Coct of Justice for which Britain had neglected to provide and she took a leading part against the proposal of share raw materials and her stand against Article X was almost spectacular. Much educational value attaches also to the appearance of Canada at the League Assembly in the instruction of other nations as to the relation of the British independencies to the mother country and the operation of the British principles of freedom and co-operation in general. It is clear that self-determination means something entirely different to different people. To some it merely means liberty to raise hell for everybody else. The British idea, so well illustrated in Canada and the other Dominions is to have freedom for one's own development without encroaching on the rights of others, but in co-operation with them for mutual advantage and for the specific advantage of each in the development of the peculiar resources and qualifications which each may possess. The loyalty of Canada to the mother country is a puzzle even to United States authorities. The moral of it all is that if democracy is to capture the world it must be on the lines of British principle and procedure.

### UNCLE SAM'S FARMERS' MARKET.

Considerable alarm is being felt in agricultural circles over the prospect of a hostile tariff in the United States which is to exclude Canadian farm products from "the land of the free and the home of the brave." Whatever the republican politicians may wish they will have to think twice before they add anything to the cost of living for United States voters. In New York this cost is still more than double the pre-war rates and the tendency is not markedly downwards except in sugar. This maintenance of high prices is undoubtedly due to the middlemen, and it is the same class who are seeking to erect tariff walls against food. The producer and the consumer alike suffer from such action. In Canada there has been a falling off in prices for cattle, and there is a tendency to sell off cattle, sheep and hogs, although stock feed is plentiful. The Christmas poultry market was excellent and prices were on the top range. Potatoes appear to be hardening in price. The mild weather has given much opportunity for plowing, and farm prospects from the weather point of view are excellent all round.

### DAMMING BELLEISLE STRAITS.

A proposal has been made to close the straits of Belleisle and thus divert the cold polar currants from this part of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. It is suggested that the effect on Eastern Quebec, on Prince Edward Island and the Maritime Provinces would be to modify the climate so greatly that the present rigorous winters would disappear. But what would Newfoundland say to this, and for the matter of that what would Maine and New York say? If the St. Lawrence were left open for Navigation in every month of the year and New Yerk were frozen up at the mouth of the Hudson there would undoubtedly be a job for a Canadian ambassador at Washington to explain what and why and how, and to pull down the straits. A good deal of misapprehension exists concerning the polar currents and all the other current, too. There is a popular idea that the Gulf Stream keeps the British Islands warm in winter. There is not the slightest effect from the Gulf Stream on the ocean or any difference between the stream and the surrounding water half way across the Atlantic. It is the ocean itself that exerts a modifying influence on temperature as it does on all insular climates. Climate is also largely the effect of magnetic conditions in the earth itself, and a study of isothermal lines will convince most people of this fact. As they vary from year to year, so climate varies, and electric phenomena, of which the aurora borealis is an example, are associated with these changes. It is entirely problematic whether a cessation of the current through the Straits of Belleisle would have the effect anticipated.

### THE NEWSPRINT SITUATION.

The Toronto Globe, The Toronto Telegram and the The Ottawa Journal, and other papers of the metropolitan type are savagely attacking Mr. E. W. Backus, the owner of the Fort Frances paper mills, and the same gentleman who was recently granted some new timber limits near Kenora by the Drury Government. The Ottawa Journal in dealing editorially with the matter calls Mr. Backus a "selfish foreign profiteer," and says he "promoted a desperate and dangenerous mess in Canada by defying the Government of this country at a time when he would calculate on stirring up international trouble." The Journal admits, however, that Mr. Backus "among others" objected to this Government order, evidently having in mind the defiance of Price Bros., Limited, in the face of the Board of Commerce order, and the ultimate victory of Price Bros.

There is getting to be a very strong suspicion among the weekly newspapers of Canada since the Canadian Press Association dissolved and the weekly newspapers got absolute control of their own affairs, that had a different attitude been assumed towards the newsprint manufacturers by the big metropolitan dailies which practically controlled the old Canadian Press Association, much of the newsprint trouble would have been avoided. At any rate since the Canadian Weekly Newspapers' Association has been controlling the affairs of the weekly newspapers of Canada they have formed an altogether different opinion of some of the newsprint manufacturers. There have, of course, been no concessions in the way of price, but troubles regarding supplies have been largely eliminated without once having to appeal to the Government or any other outside party. The C. W. N. A. officials have found Mr. E. W. Backus, who had the solid backing of the people of Kenora in his negotitions for the English timber limit, to be kindly gentleman with a great deal of generosity and sweet reasonableness in his make-up and when the matter of supplies for some of the western weekly newspapers that could use his product, which is solely roll news, was laid before him in a proper manner, he willingly and quickly obliged them. Another newsprint representative who is deserving of the hearty thanks of the weekly newspapers is Mr. H. B. Donovan of the Canada Paper Company, who on more than one occasion has gone out of his way to oblige weekly publishers who could not otherwise get paper.

In view of the concerted attack on Mr. Backus, by the metropolitan dailies, we feel it is only fair to speak of him and other newsprint makers as the Canadian Weekly Newspapers' Association has found them since they have had the opportunity of dealing with them direct. Had these men been approached in a different manner at the beginning it may be that a lot of the newsprint worries of the publishers during the past four or five years would have been avoided.—Renfrew Mercury.

# THE ROUND TABLE

### "WHERE WE MAK E FRIENDS OF BOOKS."

**"The Little House,"**

Comparison with Booth Tarkington's "Monsieur Beaucaire" is at once suggested by the simple grace of "The Little House," this romance of London by Coningsby Dawson. The story has a charm as elusive as the appealing quality that won so many followers for Maude Adams. It is as endearing as "Roaming in the Gloaming" or "Comin' Through the Rye."

Only poetic thought could endow a house with a personality so warmly human as to permit an author to let walls and starways tell his story for him in the first person without consciousness of the identity of the narrator intruding upon the reader. And that is what Mr. Dawson has accompished without once breaking the spell.

Great, gray London most imperial of cities, furnishes the background for this simple love story. It is a two-century-old house that spins the thread of romance with all the benignity that has come to it from generations of being called "home" by charming people. And what a picture the author conjures up through the mouthpiece of this old house! Mr. Dawson has "embalmed in ink" the emotional atmosphere that shrouded that city during the raids of the Huns.

The little House pretended to like the excitement. But he couldn't deceive himself; he was delighted when "the little lady who needed to be loved but didn't know it" came with her two children seeking shelter within his walls. Not far behind her came an American officer, who was having in this raid his first remote taste of warfare. They spend an hour together in the Little House, the little lady mothering the soldier with words because his smile seemed to say "Everybody has always loved and trusted me," and because his presence stanched the ebb of her own courage. As soon as the danger is past they part without learning each other's identity, without even saying good-bye, he to go to France, she to carry on her pathetic battle against loneliness and sorrow for the young husband who would never come back.

A year later, when peace has come, the little lady, searching for a home for herself and her children, stumbles upon the Little House again and is glad to find the To Let sign still out.

Somehow we know that the man whom she sometimes thinks of simply as "the American officer" will come back. And come back he does, with one empty sleeve tucked into the side pocket of his tunic. He is "the wounded officer who needed rest," and when he was in the little lady's company he felt the way a ship might feel when the winds had ceased to buffet and it lay still on a level keel in a sheltered harbor.

Miss Stella Langdale's illustrations are happiy in tune with the delicate spirit of the story. The book is attractively printed on good paper and in easily read type.

"Mr. Britling Sees It Through" no longer stands by itself as the great expondent of the philosophy of the war. Henceforth, it must share this position with Mr. Beverley Baxter's "The Parts Men Play," says the Standard commenting on the latest book of a young, but rising Canadian novelist. The book, which is favorably reviewed by other London papers, seems to have excited much interest in literary London. It is published in Canada by McClelland & Stewart.

"The Little House" by Coningsby Dawson is also published by McClelland & Stewart.

# Public Health Talks

**(By Dr. J. J. Middleton)**

**Provincial Board of Health.**

**Questions Pertaining to Medical Subjects Will Be Answered in This Paper If Letters Are Sent to Dr. J. J. Middleton, Parliament Buildings, Toronto.**

Smallpox is assuming alarming proportions in Ottawa and district according to the most recent reports from the Medical Officer of Health and compulsory vaccination of everyone is talked of as the only way of checking the outbreak.

At the present time smallpox is a real menace to the health and welfare of the people of Canada and the United States. In recent years there has been a carelessness in these countries with regard to the dangers from smallpox, because there has been a long period of comparative freedom from the severe forms of the disease. The cases that have occurred have been few and mild. But since the great war there has been a world-wide increase in the number of cases, partly because during the war, people from all parts of the globe were brought together in large numbers, and some came from countries where there was much smallpox. The lack of adequate medical and sanitary service in all the fighting countries of Europe, the unfavorable living conditions arising out of the war, and the marked falling off in universal vaccination, have resulted in an increased prevalence of the disease. In a number of instances it has occurred in severe form.

In the Province of Ontario where there has been persistent opposition to vaccination, a very severe outbreak of smallpox with thousands of cases occurred early this year, and the United States Sanitary Authorities declared a quarantine on all travellers from this Province into the United States. California reported more than 2,000 cases in 1919, and reports from several other States in the south show that smallpox has been widely prevalent recently.

**The Best Preventative.**

It is entirely within the power of the people to erect a barrier against the disease. Vaccination is the one measure which has proven its effectiveness as a means of smallpox control. The evidence shows conclusively that in those countries where vaccination is faithfully carried out, hardly any deaths from smallpox occur; and in those areas where there is public and private indifference to this simple procedure, there is always more or less mild, and, at times, virulent smallpox.

The experience of the people of Cuba is one of the most important facts we have on smallpox prevention. In 1896 and 1897 there were over 1,000 deaths each year from smallpox in the city of Havana alone. With the beginning of American occupation of the Island, vaccination was enforced; children were conpelled to be vaccinated, as were also all persons who could not produce satisfactory evidence of previous vaccination. The beneficent effect of this common-sense procedure was observed almost at once. Between 1901 and 1917, there was only one death from smallpox in the city of Havana. A similar condition was observed in Japan. Before the practice of vaccination was effectively carried out, Japan had thousands of cases and deaths each year. Epidemics of the disease were especially severe. In 1909 a law was passed requiring vaccination of each infant within three months after birth. This measure alone had the effect of greatly reducing the number of cases and deaths. There have been no serious epidemics from smallpox in Japan since vaccination was generally introduced.

**Protected Centres.**

In Canada and the United States there are no centres of smallpox infection where vaccination has been thoroughly tried out. Some cases are brought in from other countries, or from other areas where the practice of vaccination is lax, but no epidemics have commenced in these protected centres. On the other hand, in cities where there is great laxity in the enforcement of vaccination laws, or where there are no laws to be enforced, many cases occur each year.

Circumstances in connection with a recent case of smallpox at Smith's Falls, Ontario, afford a definite instance of the value of vaccination in preventing the spread of the disease. In August 1920, a son of Mr. N. Dorman of that town contracted smallpox. It was a rather severe case and the family were quarantined for six weeks. An early diagnosis was made by Dr. Eaton, Medical Officer of Health, Smith's Falls, and all the other members of the family including the grandmother, were promptly vaccinated. The vaccination was successful in every case. Smith's Falls has no Isolation Hospital, and the house being small is was impossible to isolate the patient. Sole dependence against the spread of the disease was placed on the vaccination. After the severity of the case had ceased, the boy mingled freely with the rest of the family. There were no new cases.

It is the duty of health officers, publicists, and all others interested in the public safety, to arouse their communities immediately to this menace of smallpox and to enliven public interest in the passing of vaccination laws where none now exist, or in the rigid enforcement of such laws as are now on the statute books.

# CARING FOR PLANTS IN THE HOUSE

Do you want to keep the charm and beauty of summer with you all winter? Would you like to have ferns and flowers in your house when snow piles high outside? You can do this very easily by spending a little time pleasurably and raising plants and bulbs yourself.

"But my plants always die," you object. "I never have any luck." After a little serious consideration, however, you will find that luck simply means the knowledge and application of a few important principles.

Your first consideration will be the soil of your plant. It should, for most plants, be composed of one part loam, one part leaf mold or vegetable matter and one part coarse gritty sand; if there are large roots, a greater proportion of loam will be required. Keep your soil always well stirred up on top, and under no circumstances follow the advice you sometimes hear "to bake it."

Fertilizer is usually not needed for new plants, but may be added to invigorate old soil. Either decayed cow manure or bone meal brings satisfactory results. A recipe for a good fertilizer made at home is one part nitrate soda, one part phosphate soda and one part sulphate potash. Mix this thoroughly in a gallon of water and apply one-half pint to an eight-inch pot. Be careful in putting it on the soil not to touch the foliage with it.

**Watering the Plants.**

The second and most important consideration is drainage. If surplus water is allowed to stand in the bottom of the pot, it turns the soil sour. Many, many plants die for this reason. Not only have a hole in the bottom of the flower pot, but put a coarse layer of gravey, broken brick or stone in the bottom. If you want to use a glazed crock, use it only as an outside covering for an ordinary flower pot.

"I have watered my plant thoroughly every few hours and yet it died," you have heard some one complain. Perhaps that is the very reason it did not live. There can be no set rule for watering. It varies with the season, the plant and the temperature of the room. The best advice is "water it whenever it has a dry look." Frequent slight sprinklings are ineffective.

Sometimes little flies appear on the surface soil, which are an indication of worms deeper down near the roots. A cup of fresh (not air-slaked) lime, mixed in ten quarts of water and applied all over the soil, will usually kill these enemies with two or three applications.

Most plants need sunshine, Geraniums, heliotropes, roses and foliage plants such as begonias will die unless they have the direct rays of the sun. Palms, ferns and ivys, however, will live without direct sunshine. Therefore you can reserve these for your northern windows.

**Give Them Air.**

Plants need fresh air as much as people do. The windows in the room where they are growing should be frequently opened, but a direct cold draft must not be allowed to blow across them. Neither can they thrive in a very dry atmosphere. Place a saucer of water in the room to supply moisture if the heat is very dry.

If your plant happens to get frozen during the winter, remove it immediately to a cool, dark room and drench it with cold water. Some people think they should revive it with warm water and heated air, but they are wrong; the treatment must be gradual.

The pores of plants must be kept open and free from dust. Put your plants in another room when the sweeping is being done or else cover them with a cloth.

Never pot your plants in pots too big for them under the supposition that they will expand to fit them. Rather put them in smaller receptacles. When they outgrow these repot them. In order to do this take out the plant with all its soil and place it as it is in a larger pot and apply more soil around the edges, but be careful not to put in too much.

**Starting Slips.**

More house plants are grown from slips than from seeds. To do this take a branch half ripe and cut a slit three inches long. Take off all the leaves except the upper two and root it well in wet sand several inches thick putting one and one-half inches of the slip under the sand. Keep this thoroughly moist. When the roots begin to grow put your plant, with its sand, into a pot provided with other soil. Some slips, such as oleander and ivy, will root in water.

Perhaps the greatest enjoyment in raising plants is derived from planting bulbs. Order your bulbs-hyacinth, tulip, narcissus daffodil and lily—whichever you prefer—and put them into a soil composed of one part ordinary garden loam, one part old cow manure or bone meal and one part sand, all thoroughly mixed. Keep them well watered and allow them to remain in a cool, dark place till their roots are formed. This process usually takes about six weeks. If you use new pots soak them thoroughly before using.