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"Times" Essay Competition

TWO MORE ESSAYS PUBLISHED

The essays sent in for the "Nepean Times" competition, in which essays were required to describe beauty spots of Penrith district, reached a high standard of merit. It is quite evident that the purpose of the competition—viz., to encourage the boys and girls to take an interest in the beauty spots of their district—has been met to a large extent.

Last week we published the first and second prize-winners. This week we publish the essay of Joan Blaikie (Penrith District School), which was ranked first by the adjudicator, and also that of Ruby Payne Scott (Penrith District School), which was specially mentioned as disclosing real artistic merit. Books will be awarded to the writers of these essays.

Probably another couple will yet be published.

THE SCENIC NEPEAN.

(By Joan Blaikie, Penrith District School.)

At this solemn evening hour there seems to come a pause in the day's occupation. As I sit here on a high point on Mill Bank farm overlooking the Nepean, and lying between the lonely banks of the Blue Mountains and the barren hills of York Estate stretching eastward, about two miles up the river opposite the old woolen mill, whose aged walls tower in the atmosphere, I am overwhelmed with thoughts of the celestial works of Nature. Looking southward my view is bounded by Lovett's Mountain, upon which is built the well known home of the late James Ewan, now occupied by Mr. Colin Smith. Along the winding western mountain rambles a passenger train towards the precipitous cutting at Glenbrook, whose strains voice resounds in the quiet glens beneath.

Behold our never-falling sun is sinking behind the western sky, and our river is now reflecting all her grandeur. The silver water flowing noiselessly between the hills seems to be having her last fun and frolic before her joy-maker goes behind the Great Western Barrier. She is dancing among the rays of sunshine, which now have grown weak, and tiny jolly waves rise up from the smoother surface of water beneath.

The cooling breeze of evening is blowing up the valley and delaying the course of her never-idle waters, which are endeavoring to steal along silently to join their mother sea. Stretching far westward the lofty, uneven crags of the Blue Mountains form a boundary to my unshared vision. The trees around me are in their summer frocks; some in shades of light, others in a dark velvety green. Still to me all appear to be the sacred works of Nature. Those along the topmost peaks of the Blue Mountains rear their shady branches high into the heavens, seeming to look down with dignity upon their other companions. The feecy wool-like clouds certain the dome of heaven. Oh "sol" seems to be attracting them beside his well-known path across the sky, where he is hurrying rapidly along. These soft fluffy bunches seem to be resting their weight on the strong mountain, waiting for their friend to bless them. His old laughing face shines upon them, and before saying good-night he reflects his great orange-tinted shade down, fringing them with a golden outline of fiery fervency, thus giving them their share of radiance for the day which is nearly ended. Beneath this meadows dance, and the great green carpet-like fields stretch on either side of our track, and they too are streaked with grand searchlight sunbeams. Here the cattle feed peacefully around the choicest parts of the fields, where the setting crimson planes are his best of light. Now and then a few venture down the mossy slopes of the banks to drink of the refreshing water after the hot day. Nature has provided for her cattle the luxuriant weeping willows, whose long, whip-like branches droop into the dull waters beneath, darkened by the shade of their verdant tresses. Here the cattle camp for the night, for the foliage is so thick that no wind or weather can enter beneath them. Here and there on these black bottomless shadows appear a tiny silver circle made by the mercurial of the river dwellers. It is not a wonderful sight which God has made so well and brightly!

The scented orange trees of dark green color extend from the water's edge to the foot of the mountains, growing in well-cultivated land, and these too in their mathematical order, add to the spot's attractiveness. These fruits of the trees shall bring to their owners wealth and prosperity for their hard labor among them.

Ah! he has just gone. Gone behind the western sky to decorate and cheer the sphere he has just entered. Still millions of silver star-like dots shimmer in the clear mirror-like waters, which the reflection of the sun is now gladdening, while on other parts the blue and golden heavens cast their shadows upon the zig-zag waves which are not yet shaded.

Out on you guess to hear the jacks laugh. He is just bidding his friends "good-night" before seeking his home of rest. Other tiny birds fit about chirping cheerily and mingling their melodious notes with the splashing mangling sound made by the fish at this refreshing hour.

Overlooking the water grows the waving corn, stretching its leaves standing in great staleness, and rustling in the wind with their rustle.

Ah, how charming it is. The whirr of the pines float gently over the stream, the crickets sing their nightly song, and the music of Nature's sweetest melodies. These weird, His joyful sounds call to my mind the merry words quoted by Milton—
"Come and trip it is as you go,
On the light fantastic toe,
And in thy right hand bring with thee
The mountain nymph sweet liberty."
Soon all changes. Such a contrast is hardly possible, but within the course of an hour nothing can be heard of the meeting, leaving the locusts screeching most unseasonably among the trees.

"To walk the studious cloister's pale,
And love the high embow'd roof,
With antique pillars, and stained windows richly light,
Casting a dim religious light."
—Milton.

All parts of nature seems to have grown lifeless. Why is it so? The soft blue sky is blotted from view by the collection of great, grey, angry clouds which have banished away the heavenly shadows from off the waters, leaving it veiled with a dark, gloomy picture. Above the horizon I see the moon rise, but to-night has lost her ethereal radiance, and she cannot shine as usual, but just peeps her once laughing, creamy face mistily and drowsily through the thick screen of rain-filled clouds down upon her silent Nepean waters, and gives one twinkle and that's all, as if she were apologising for her laziness. The locusts cease to sing, for the night has become even too changed for them, and so in their disgust have resolved to become silent, in accordance with the other merry-makers of the earlier even.

The river is lying between now solemn fountains that were once dancing with joy and inviting fairies to play upon them; but she too has lost her friskiness, and lies dead between the still banks of the solitary grey, gloomy night, waiting and waiting for the jolly wings of loneliness to pass away, and to see once again appear from his trundle bed in the eastern sky, the ever-smiling Apollo in his usual joyous merriment.

How is it that such a change should come upon our river, for just an hour or two ago it seemed to dance and quiver.

MOONLIGHT ON THE NEPEAN

(By R. Payne-Scott, P.D.S.)

As the sun set over the weir I lay on the verdant turf meditating. I had been there since early morn, and was tired of climbing over rocks and boulders to pick the flowers that grew in their wild splendour there. They were by my side then in an old tin full of crystal clear water. I bent over and plucked a blue-bell. It was a golden star, the sun of the world. In the south Venus shone, seeking to surpass in glory even the sun. This is but a small flower, a flower forgotten by the world as its daily round. It is a replica of the sky, that wonderful heavenly power which is so often forgotten in the excitement of other things. It is only when one is lonely that it is remembered, but when others what it may do, what an influence it may have, in even that short time.

As I moved a bough brushed against my face, and raising my hand, I found the blossom of a white-flowered orange-blossom, that pure white flower with which we crown our brides. It is like unto the clouds which crown the fairest head of all, that of the Queen of the Sky.

But the clouds were all on fire and were changing color. Those nearest to the sun were golden, and those further away pink. The sky seemed as a sea on which many-finned boats, orange-blossom, that pure white flower with which we crown our brides. It is like unto the clouds which crown the fairest head of all, that of the Queen of the Sky.

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Conditions in Germany

SYDNEY MAN'S RETURN.

FACTORIES BUSY IN GERMANY

Mr. Frank Albert, of J. Albert and Son, Sydney, recently returned from a trip to America and Europe, and gives the following impressions:—

In America business conditions are improving wonderfully well, while the manufacturing trade is so flourishing that the factories can hardly cope with the orders in hand.

In Germany, contrary to the popular idea, conditions industrially are so good that most of the factories are working two shifts and making preparations to work the whole 24 hours. Even then, the orders that are pouring in from different parts of the world, including France, are of such magnitude that they cannot execute them for fully six months ahead.

Politically, as everybody knows, and as shown by the condition of the mark itself, the country is chaotic—but the backbone of any country is the working man, and he constitutes over 85 per cent of the population, and gets paid in "kind," he is not only indifferent to the political situation as regards government, but really takes no notice of happenings in his country, as he is too busy working. In fact in France they are most perturbed at what is going on in Germany than they are at the state of their own beautiful country; and although the French say they cannot go on with the reconstruction of their devastated areas without being paid the reparations, nevertheless they are building on these areas just the same, and what were for years desolated open spaces are now busy hives of industry.

Italy, we think, has the greatest genius for a Statesman that the world has produced. His name is Mussolini, and he rules with an invincible arm of Fascist.

Switzerland has always been well-to-do, even during war time. This country at present is packed with men, and it about the most expensive place in which to make a sojourn.

England seems to be a very peculiar place to analyze. Owing to the occupation of the Ruhr by the French, she is sending huge quantities of coal and iron to Germany. This, of course, is employing an enormous number of people, but an account of exporting the commodities named the price of coal, naturally, has gone up. The working man, although he says nothing about having a billet, is complaining about the rise of a few shillings in the price of coal, and is urging the English Government to see if they can use sufficient force on the French to have a speedy arrangement with the Germans regarding reparations.

(Published by Arrangement).

WOMEN AND PROHIBITION.

BAPPLING PROBLEM.

In America, says the London "Morning Post," the temperance cause has always been strongly marked among its women, and they fell easy dupes to the specious arguments of those who pleaded that, because so many women had no liking for alcohol, it would be a comparatively easy task to stamp out the "craving" who among those unfortunate males who were dining in light lagers and dinner-club. Prohibition has been extended in the United States, not because it worked well, but because in the experimental stage, it refused to work at all. Originally confined to certain States, prohibition had to be extended to the Federal Government for the simple reason that no State could be dry, if there was a wet State across the border.

But even when the whole Republic was declared dry, the difficulties only increased, because the Mexican and Canadian borders, and from overseas, alcoholic liquors can be smuggled into the country. Logically, therefore, the men may soon hear of ten million women insisting that no Government officer in any country of the world must take office unless he declares himself to be a pussyfoot.

The probability is that if it were not for the cessation of "dry" agitation carried on among its women, America would have been spared one of the most baffling problems which has ever been placed before a modern State.

all, for without it everything would die, even ourselves. This treasure-house is open to all. Yet how many have ever seen it, ever revelled in its glories; and yet how many more have killed the birds and pulled the flowers, to leave them lying on the ground to wither and die. This treasure-house is not built of jewels for vanity. It is in a place to love and care for, and we should all be proud of our building. The Nepean district has some of the most beautiful scenery in Australia, including the Nepean River, the tributary of the mighty Hawkesbury.

I heard a sound of splashing in the distance, and, wandering along the banks a few paces saw the water running over a boulder and forming a miniature waterfall. There was a clearing amongst the trees, and I gathered some sticks and lit a fire. The light served the better to reveal what would serve as my bedroom. It was oblong in shape, and the close green turf was carpeted with fallen leaves. I made some coals, and, after quaffing it, rolled up my blanket and prepared for sleep. But sleep would not come. I lay awake for hours watching a passing breeze blow the leaves in my chamber about. They seemed as fairy-nymphs dancing in that tiny crescent, the new-born moon, which was shining overhead. An instant, however, the splash of the waterfall and the ceaseless wall of the mopeko lulled me to sleep.

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