

THE OBSERVER

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SHALL WE DISPENSE WITH GRAMMAR.

An eastern educator of note urges that the teaching of formal grammar in the schools be abandoned. It is a waste of time, he contends. The speaking of correct English may be acquired more readily and surely by ear than by rule, is his theory.

Much may be said for this view. Doubtless a great deal of the instruction in formal grammar is a futile weariness to the flesh for both teacher and pupil. The child of educated parents unconsciously learns to speak in conformity with grammar. We know a little chap of four years who rebuked his sister for saying "You and I," when the objective demanded "me." It was the ear and not rule that prompted the rebuke.

Grammar has been made too artificial. Ardent technicians in language have endeavored to reduce English to system and to fathom rules for every use of parts of speech, and the effort has multiplied rules and developed hair splitting distinctions that bewilder the learner and breed an utter distaste for all language study.

And this is to be regretted, because there is no realm of study more fascinating than that which opens up to the students of words. The child in whom is induced the love of words, with all their romantic history, their fertilizing possibilities for thought, is on the road to a sound and thorough education. Since words are the fundamental and essential tools of all human endeavor, the living bodies of ideas, the main avenues to the treasures of knowledge, love for them, interest in them, are the best quickeners of intelligence.

A word cannot be pursued to its source without discovering scores of things of enlarging value. The pursuit of words unearths the habits of peoples, their social relations, their

religion, science and philosophy. Once given a vital interest in words, the desire to use them wisely and correctly will come, and grammar will take its proper and intelligent place—not as an arbitrary and troublesome study, but as a useful method—bearing the same relation to these tools of the brain that instruction in carpenter

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try bears to the saw, the chisel and the plane.

And, in the second place, grammar may well be spared to us, although we could wish it pruned of any absurd refinements and much perplexing terminology. As a resolver of occasional doubts, it retains its value even for the trained writer, who has come to rely wholly upon ear and habit. Such an experienced writer as Arnold Bennett was caught tripping in his latest novel. His ear led him astray in the use of "whom"—a place where many of us trip—as the subject of a verb. Such dangers are ever present, and a knowledge of grammar alone can save when the ear fails. Had Bennett troubled to parse his sentence, he would have avoided the pitfall.

But the main thing is language study, and as we think the foundation to much knowledge is a love of words themselves, an interest in them as living things. If the teaching of grammar tends to discourage this, then there is something wrong in the method of teaching.

PANAMA AND NICARAGUA.

There are indications that the so-called Nicaragua treaty is to come up for serious consideration at this session of congress. The reason given is the growing fear that the Panama Canal may be found inadequate to meet the demands of traffic. One of the prominent Republican members of the Senate recently took the position that Nicaraguan affairs had been suspended too long, and that the matter should be settled one way or the other. Much criticism of the treaty has been heard. This has dealt principally with the loan feature. The proposed right of way for a canal through Nicaragua is now regarded as of most importance. When the treaty was first presented to the Senate, the canal clause attracted little attention, for the selection of the Panama route had been made.

But now discussion of the Nicaraguan right of way has been revived. No one knows how much trouble will be experienced in Panama. On Sept. 18th the worst slides in the history of the canal occurred. From then on, the waterway was practically closed to all shipping. Recently it was reopened to vessels drawing less than twenty feet of water. Weather and other conditions have been so satisfactory that the dredges were able to accomplish a great deal. Assuming

that no further obstructions will be met with, it is said that all traffic may use the canal soon after the first of the year.

But the future is by no means settled. The cause of the September slides remains uncorrected, although General Goethals believes that he has discovered it. Whether the sides of the waterway will be sufficiently strong to bear the earth that has since slid down from the hills is perplexing the engineers.

While the Panama canal, it is hoped, will be reopened during this month, this does not mean that the dredging will be complete. A great work must be done before traffic can reach the maximum. Some shipping interests have expressed a doubt as to whether the Panama waterway can ultimately serve all commerce. If not, the right of way in Nicaragua would be regarded as valuable. This interest has only recently developed, and it appears that it may have no little effect on the consideration of the Nicaragua treaty.

Some of these \$5 an hour dancing teachers of last season can now get jobs tending door in skating rinks.

MOVIE NEWS.

Hummingbird Here Monday.

A three-cornered struggle for an innocent woman participated in by her husband, an intriguer and the victim of a former successful coup by this crawling snake forms the basis of the thrilling story of "The Mummy and the Humming-Bird," in which Charles Cherry, the distinguished Frohman star, is introduced to the motion picture public in a Paramount picture produced by the Famous Players Film company. This screen adaptation of the play by Isaac Henderson, which is the attraction at the Arcade Monday of this week, abounds in suspense, in scenes of gripping intensity, and in moments of breathless dramatic thrill, as three strong wills clash in the struggle for mastery. The delightful acting of Lillian Tucker, the self-effacing art of Arthur Haaps in his wonderful interpretation of the thankless role of D'Orelli, and the powerful though sympathetic interpretation of Giuseppe by William Sorelle render complete the enjoyment of the excellent work of Mr. Cherry. The art of the star, revealed in his consummately clever depicting of the part of Lord Lumley, the charming though absent minded scientist who neglects his beautiful wife for his chemistry, will be a revelation to those few who have not had the pleasure of seeing his remarkable work

on the stage in support of such eminent actresses as Henrietta Crossman, Maxine Elliott, Mary Mannerling and Ethel Barrymore, with all of whom he has appeared at various times.

When Lord Lumley neglects his wife, she falls an easy prey to the wiles of the talented D'Orelli, a past master of the art of reducing the feminine heart and brain to the danger point. But D'Orelli has already accomplished the downfall of one woman in his native Italy, and the enraged husband of his victim is in pursuit of the perpetrator of the deed with vengeance in his heart. What part he plays in the domestic story of the Lumleys, and how he finally gets the revenge which he seeks form the nucleus of this absorbing drama.

Mary Pickford Film Tuesday.
Mary Pickford is proud of a letter received from a Japanese student at Harvard University complimenting her upon the artistry of her work in

"Madame Butterfly." It is one of the greatest compliments that she has ever received, as the educated Japanese is quick to resent any inaccuracies in depicting the customs of his native land. This film is at the Arcade Tuesday of next week.

At the Sommer Hotel.
L. N. Conley and wife, Cove; J. M. Kemp, Grants Pass; Mrs. E. C. Rocheford, North Powder; S. H. Moss, Seattle; T. H. Austin, Portland; H. B. Hagen, Spokane; C. T. Kronenberg, Elgin; Maggie McKenzie, Stella Newbill, Summerville; Ethel Cochran, Union; C. T. McDaniel, Wallowa; M. W. Case, G. H. Fullenrider, Portland; F. D. Arrington, Chicago; H. H. Little, Cove; David B. Seger, Portland; E. C. Tucker, Salt Lake, A. E. Willey, Wallowa; L. B. Carter, Cove; E. T. Tobin, Seattle; Paul C. Dorritzer, Portland; William Owen, J. W. McConnell, Redpath, Cove; R. H. Lewis, Sol Harris, Portland.

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