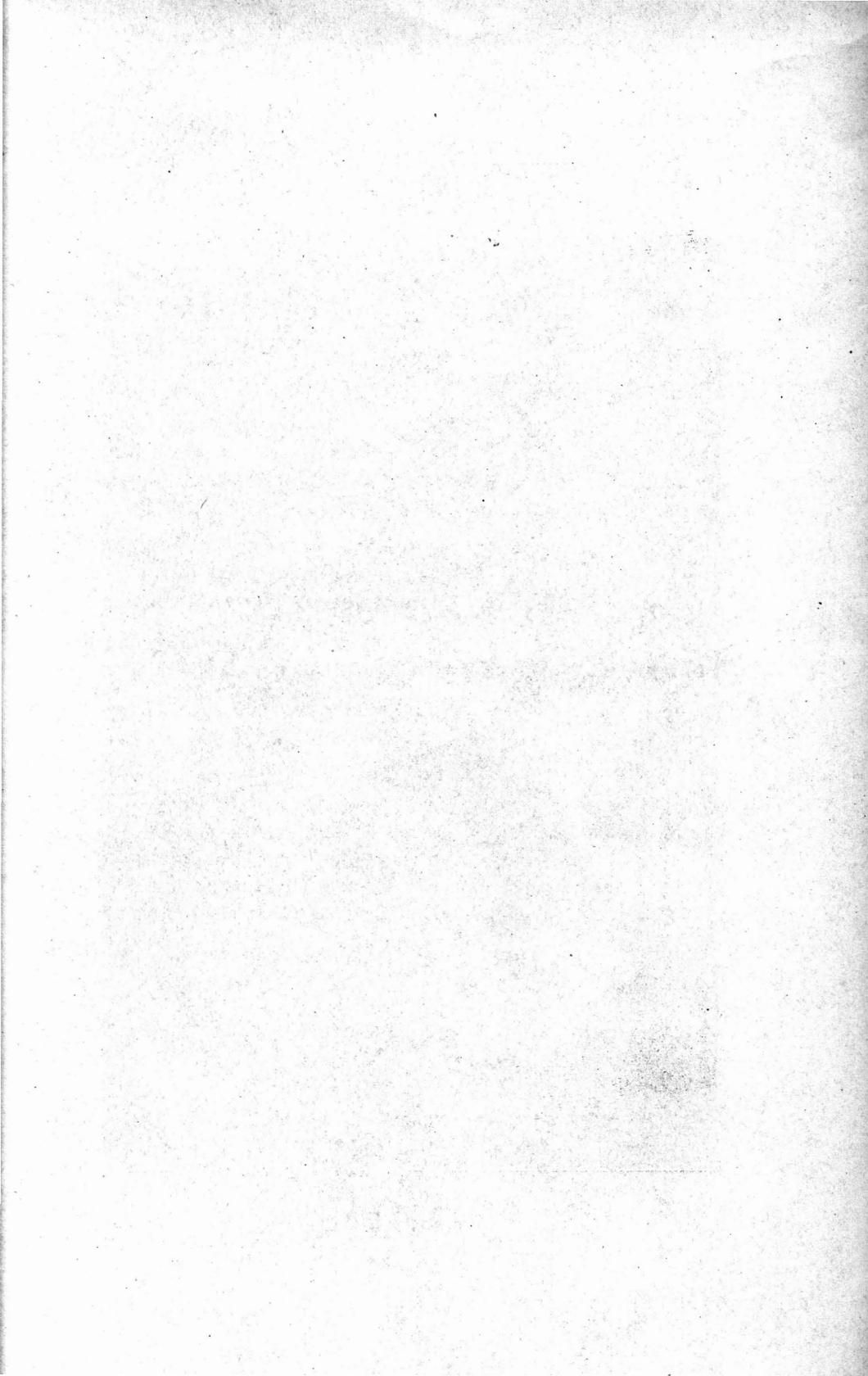


## The Art of Living



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The United States Department of Agriculture  
H. H. Williamson, Director, College Station, Texas



## FOREWORD

This bulletin is designed especially for use in home demonstration clubs, and 4-H boys and girls clubs.

An understanding of the simple fundamental rules of beauty in nature, art and life should increase one's joy in life through a more intelligent response to beauty in one's natural environment and a greater desire to infuse into the useful and practical things of every days work some measure of the aesthetic.

This bulletin might be helpful in every demonstration related to the home and family life.

It might find a place in the programs of any community group interested in the art of living.

Four programs based upon the text of the bulletin have been arranged. Copies will be sent upon request. Others of equal interest could be developed by the groups themselves.

The last pages in this publication are devoted to the rhythmic analysis of verse. The hope is that this may aid many families, gathered around the home fireside, to greater enjoyment of poetry.

CONCLUSION

The author is indebted to the following persons for their assistance in the preparation of this report: Mr. J. H. ...

An investigation of the ...

The following ...

It is ...

From ...

It is ...

The ...

at ...

# The Art Of Living

By

Mrs. Maggie W. Barry  
Adviser in Rural Organization Work

## I

### HOW TO SEE AND HEAR BEAUTY IN NATURE

Generally speaking all created things may be classified into three groups: Nature, Man and Art. Nature and man are the self-expression of God. Art is the self-expression of man whether the things made are utilitarian or aesthetic. While no strict dividing line may be drawn between the useful and the beautiful, those things that contribute predominantly to our physical comfort and welfare we call useful and those that nourish the spirit we call beautiful, or again, utilitarian and aesthetic.

While the scientists tell us man is an animal and a part of nature we may also believe the poet who tells us that God made him a little lower than the angels and thus gave him power to touch two worlds, know them and live in them—the world of material things around him and the world of unseen things that he enters through imagination and faith.

Man uses and enjoys the world of nature through his five senses, touch, taste, smell, sight and hearing. Touch, taste and smell serve more generally the body, and sight and hearing the spirit of man.

No doubt Wordsworth enjoyed the delicate fragrance of the daffodils that came to him through the sense of smell, but it was the mass of golden color and the sprightly dance that remained a perpetually recurring joy. But even these senses can transform the ordinary and the everyday into images of enduring beauty only when the brain is sensitized by feeling and imagination. Without these the "primrose by a river's brim" would be to us just a yellow primrose and nothing more—the daffodils to Wordsworth merely a field of flowers.

A knowledge of the three general laws underlying all beauty of sight and sound in Nature will interest us and help to stir the feelings and the imagination. These three laws are: repetition or putting like with like; variety, and contrast. Did you ever think what it would mean to your nerves and peace of mind to live with a sky above you day after day all splotted with gold and reds and blues and purples like a gorgeous sunset or with even the delicate pastel shades of the early dawn? Or can you picture the earth around you yellow and red and blue and purple instead of the prevailing greens and browns of lawns and fields and trees? Think of a horse or a bird that would be covered partly with hair and partly with feathers!

If you can visualize such things you will at once see the beauty and feel the restfulness of the law of like with like that gives us a broad expanse of blue or grey sky above us, green and brown fields and lawns around us.

I always enjoy a trip on the train through the pine forests of Texas. Their tall straight bodies give one the satisfaction of repeated, stately, perpendicular lines that reach to eternity. Very different is the mood such trees induce from that of woods of scrub oak or great stretches of sage, though these have a beauty too, but a different kind. Because of its restfulness, repetition is perhaps the most universally and most frequently used of all the laws of beauty.

But an unbroken blue sky from zenith to horizon day after day or a uniform greenness of trees and fields would grow monotonous and irritating. So we have a second law, variety.

Across blue skies are soft white clouds floating, grey skies open on patches of blue; in the green lawn and the foliage of trees and shrubs we see a variety of shades and tints of green, sometimes a predominance of yellow-green, sometimes of blue-green.

Even the vast unbroken plains and endless expanse of water have their sameness broken by moods, by shadows and

changing color for those who have the eyes to see. And just here remember the eye may be trained to see color, light and shadows just as the taste may be educated to enjoy particular foods.

When we come to the third law, contrast, we find mother nature using it very sparingly. The all day blue or gray sky with its intense white or cool lights and shadows goes on a spree for a brief while and bursts into a riot of color before it fades into darkness and has another fling before it settles again into the blue and gray of another day.

The quiet green woods of Spring and Summer burn their Autumn fires of gold and red only a few weeks before they begin their long winter sleep. Though the evergreens rest in their green clothes through the winter they are dull and sombre so they may enjoy their spring brightness.

A rose bush in bloom is a perfect illustration of these three laws of beauty; amid a mass of green leaves are a few brilliant spots of color—red, yellow, pink or white blooms forming a striking contrast. While the leaves are a repetition of green, no two are identical in color, and while all are enough alike in form to distinguish them from a lilac leaf, no two are exactly the same, so in the mass of apparent sameness there is almost infinite variety.

Nature in her beneficence and wisdom has given us another element of beauty—rhythm. Link together two or more contrasting colors, lines or sounds, repeat them and we have perhaps an expression of the oldest of all the instincts—rhythm—the gratification of which through the eye and the ear gives never failing satisfaction.

Examples of this beautiful law are to be found all around us. Listen to the fall of the stream, the sighing of the pines, the *drip*, drip of the rain on the roof. The mind divides such sounds into accented and unaccented groups. This same mental habit separates the repeated tick of the clock into two or three beat rhythmic patterns. The earth revolves in rhythmic divisions of day and night, day and night; and the seasons

repeat themselves in two beat rhythms of hot and cold, or warm and cool. The mountain ranges rise and fall in a variety of contrasting curve-groups.

In the veining of the leaves, the marking of the seashell and the rise and fall of the ocean tides, there are rhythms that are the envy of the painter, the poet and the musician.

To see and hear this beauty one does not have to know the philosophy or science of aesthetics, or the laws of prosody or the technique of the musician or the painter. Just stop for a moment each night, look at the heavens above you, the shadows around you and listen to the mysterious sounds in the silences. Pause in the round of daily duties to look again at the sky and the earth, listen to the sounds of vocal nature near and far remembering that,

“The heavens declare the glory of God.  
The firmament showeth his handiwork  
Day unto day uttereth speech  
And night unto night showeth knowledge.”



Notice the rhythmic veining of the leaves and the balance of symmetrical opposition.

## II

### COLOR AND LINE AND THE ARTS OF SIGHT

In the last study we heard about the two senses through which we enjoy the most beautiful things in nature, the sense of sight and the sense of hearing. Unlike taste, touch and smell, the joy we have in beauty that comes to us through the eye and the ear custom does not stale. We can have ice cream until we are satiated, the heavy fragrance of a jasmine flower in a closed room we tolerate only for a little while, though an occasional whiff coming in through the open window we catch with a thrill of delight, but beautiful pictures never pall upon us. We can live with them all day and every day and never know satiety. The more we hear a Beethoven sonata, a Schubert song, or a Chopin nocturne, the more we want to hear it, the greater our sense of pleasure and satisfaction.

These two senses have given us two distinct groups of fine arts created by man, the arts of sight and the arts of sound. Sculpture, architecture and painting we enjoy through the eye and so we call them the arts of sight. Music and poetry stir the imagination through the ear and so we speak of them as the arts of sound. The arts of sight please us through an arrangement of lines and colors, using the same laws that we find in the beautiful things of nature. The tall parallel lines of many of our skyscrapers with rhythmic spacing of windows give us the kind of satisfaction and pleasure that we find in the straight bodies of the pine trees.

Perpendicular lines give a sense of height, and repeated in proper proportion suggest spiritual things. The people of the Middle Ages living always with the thought of the heaven they hoped to attain expressed themselves in a beautiful art form, the Gothic Cathedral with its many upward standing lines and tall spires. Churches today have lost their steeples. A future generation looking back on the twentieth century civilization may find some significance in that.

In our everyday lives an understanding of the use of perpendicular lines will add much to the beauty of the houses we live in, the clothes we wear, and the lawns and gardens we plant.

In rooms with low ceilings we can still have a sense of height and spaciousness by breaking the walls with the perpendicular lines of windows, door facings, slender panels and striped paper.

Low, broad people can add to their apparent height with a few judiciously used lines that reach upward in the designing of their clothes, in the materials they choose and the ornaments they wear.

Horizontal lines often give strength and solidity. They sometimes serve to keep aspiring perpendicular lines firmly based on solid earth.

Greek temples were low and broad, formed by perpendicular and horizontal lines, but were beautifully proportioned, refined, simple and elegant. The Greek gods lived on Olympus but were very human and loved to disport themselves in Athe-



Rows of ploughed fields have the beauty of repeated parallel lines.

nian groves and waters and walk with men. While they were conceived as super-human, they were not spiritual.

Curved and flowing lines are used to give grace and beauty and a sense of motion. The tall low-bending pines that "wag their high tops when fretted by the gusts of heaven" induce a very different mood from that we experience in looking at the same pines in their stately stillness on a quiet day.

The severe outlines of colonial hallways are softened by the graceful curves of the great staircases.

The sinuous, rhythmic curves of the human body were the inspiration of Greek sculptors and an important factor in Hellenic culture.

Color is the artistic medium of feeling and is rarely used as a basis of form. The stained glass windows of the old cathedrals penetrate the gloom of the dark interiors with a soft, elusive radiance that suffuses the spirit with the holy, mystical, religious feeling of the East.

More even than in the use of lines we should observe the laws of beauty in the distribution of color, especially looking to a very sparing use of contrast. Nature gives us sunsets only once in twenty-four hours and not always are they accompanied with masses of gorgeous color. The stained glass windows of a Cathedral are small in proportion to the great neutral colored wall spaces.

A sweep of green lawn cut up here and there with beds of gay flowers is as offensive to our sense of order and harmony as an all day sky with splashes of red, orange, blue and yellow would be.

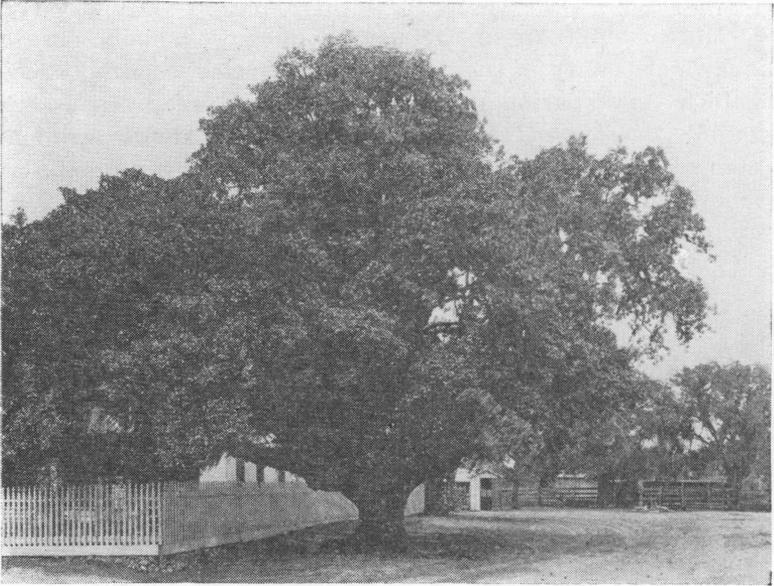
Homes should be a refuge from the day's noise and stir. But if the "refuge" is vibrating with ill-proportioned and unharmonized color the jangled nerves will find little peace. In furnishing and decorating the home we should carefully observe how mother nature uses her paint brush, study the cool and warm colors, primary, secondary and complementary,

and the methods of harmonizing them. This knowledge can easily be acquired from the color charts and the many simple texts available almost anywhere.

Emotional reaction to certain colors and long association with them in nature, religion and ceremonial traditions give a symbolic significance to them that adds to our sense of their appropriateness and beauty.

The old masters gave to Saint Mary Magdalene a red robe because she loved much, while the mother of Christ always wore red and blue, love and constancy. Violet was the color that clothed the martyred saints and belongs to the long shadows of the dying day. Green gives the fresh hope of bursting spring, while grays and browns bring the rest and peace of the earth's long winter sleep.

The study of color is most fascinating and creates an "appetite that grows with what it feeds upon." The beauty of line and color is always with us through the providence of God, if we have the eyes to see and understand.



Much of the beauty of trees grows out of the perfect balance of branches on either side of the center.

### III

#### RHYTHM AND THE ARTS OF SOUND

In "Color and Line" we have learned how man has imitated and elaborated the laws of like with like, variety and contrast, to create the arts of sight—painting, sculpture, architecture. The same laws he uses in producing the more elusive arts of sound—music and poetry.

In these arts man has elaborated into intricate patterns a universal medium of aesthetic expression in nature—rhythm.

In the arts that we enjoy through the ear we discern these rhythmic forms through the repetition of accented and unaccented sound groups. We call them two beat and three beat rhythms, for however much they may be elaborated, the elaborations are but variations of the two simple groups.

Nature's favorite pattern in the realm of sound is the two beat rhythmic form, and this is the most generally used pattern of the musician and the poet.

The *drip, drip; drip, drip; drip, drip* of the rain drops is heard in the marching songs and the old ballads of the people. Primitive people working together singing in rhythmic unison wailed their dead or greeted the victorious warrior and hunter with communal songs appropriate to the occasion. The rhythmic beat was very marked both in their singing and in the bodily movements with which the song was accompanied. The songs of the sailors hauling in the sails are a survival of the early work songs.

In the singing of the Negro spirituals the rhythm is so marked that the entire audience will sway their bodies in unison, and at the height of his religious emotion the Negro preacher unconsciously falls into grouping his words into rhythmic measures, frequently with an inflection that carries his voice, in music terms, from the tonic to the minor fifth keeping his body moving to the rhythmic beat.

Rhythm is one of the oldest instincts because before the child saw the light of day it felt the life throb of the mother's heart, the rise and fall of the breathing in and out. So this early established feeling for rhythm makes the moaning of the wind, the murmur of the stream, the repeated measures and phrase of a musical strain or a stanza of poetry a continual joy. To know rhythm, to create it and feel it through bodily movement, singing or speaking, is a pleasure that never palls.

Since hearing is a more spiritual sense than sight, color and line however vividly portrayed, proportioned and harmonized can never stir the imagination and the emotions to such an ecstatic degree as music, oratory and poetry. The emotional and religious life of all peoples at their most intense moments is recorded in their music and poetry, sung or spoken, and in their dances. Bards, troubadours, drummers, and trumpeters have always been an important part of the pomp and circumstances of war. The beautiful hymnology of the church is one of the strongest of its perpetuating forces.

Because music is our most fruitful source of rhythm except dancing, perhaps, it should always have a place in the recreation hour of the home and of the community. Duets, trios, quartets and small orchestra groups in the family or community circle, not only give recreational pleasure but develop fundamental principles of character. Unconsciously from such pleasures come training in self-control, consideration for others, a sense of values—all of which are essential qualities in satisfying ensemble playing.

Poetry, like music, stirs the imagination and the emotions primarily through the sense of hearing and so it is an art of sound.

This may be surprising to many who read their poetry with the eye on the printed page and so know nothing of its rhythms and cadences and varied speech melodies that, when heard, sensitize the mind to receive its thought and imagery.

The earliest poetry was almost pure rhythm and that which has become universally enshrined in the hearts of

humanity, even in sophisticated literary periods, has very obvious rhythmic patterns sometimes made with nonsense words. No formal speech could make one feel the carefree joy of the young lovers in the springtime in Shakespeare's "It Was a Lover and His Lass," so much as the pure rhythm of the nonsense refrain, "With a *hey* and a *ho*, and a *hey nini no!*" and the charmingly phrased "In the *spring time*, the only pretty *ring time*."

While nearly seven-eighths of English poetry is written in the familiar two-beat time or elaborations of this simple form, the three-beat forms are the basis of some of the most vigorous as well as the tenderest and saddest of our verse literature. Browning's six-eight marching time and rhythms of the galloping horses are thrilling in their movement alone.

Tennyson chose a three-beat form varied by most expressive pauses and lengthened lines to give us the most beautiful lullaby in English poetry. In "Sweet and Low" we have the distinct feel of the slowly rocking cradle, while the rich and varied speech melodies create the atmosphere of tender mother love and lend beauty to the quiet prayer for the safe home-coming of the sailor father and husband.

Two and three beat rhythms with accent varying in the degree of emphasis used when spoken are closely related to music.

I think perhaps one reason that we so rarely enjoy poetry as an art of sound is because so few people who read it or teach it have mastered even the medium of expression—the spoken word. Not only do we lose its rhythm and cadences, but what is equally important, its colorful and varied speech melodies, that are capable of expressing as exquisite and delicate shades of feeling, imagination and thought as the tones of a violin or piano.

If you read or sing our generally used doxology, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow," with an imaginative and emotional understanding that will color the large rich vowels in such significant words as "all," in sound one of the longest

words in the language, “flow,” “below,” “hosts,” “Father,” “Holy Ghost,” you will feel a devotional expansion of soul you have never felt before.

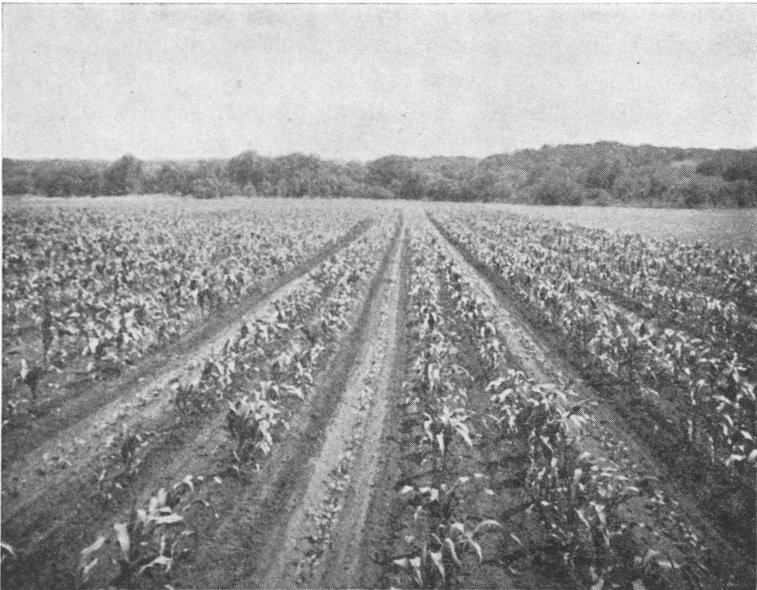
The subject matter of all art has the same source—man’s experience of life and nature. It is only the medium and the technique through which the poet, the musician, the painter, the sculptor, and the architect find expression that differentiate the art forms.

## IV

### THE ART OF LIVING

Complete human living is the highest artistic expression of any age. It is neither an art of sight nor of sound. We perceive it through no one of the five or sixteen senses that scientists have defined, but through some unrevealed faculty by which we become conscious of that indescribable, intangible something we call personality.

No human being has ever attained complete artistic expression through living any more than the painter has found it in color and line, or the musician in rhythmic sound. Each is bound by the limitations of the medium he uses and the technique it is possible for him to acquire. Within these limitations, however, one may express through the medium of living as much of beauty, truth, imagination and feeling as the artist does in a picture, a cathedral, a symphony or a poem.



Merging into far horizons the apparently converging lines give perspectives often touched with mystery.

The first years of living should be spent in training the body through the laws of repetition necessary to habit formation, variety and contrast. A certain basic regularity of right habits in the things that are essential to the harmonious functioning and growth of all parts of the body should be acquired early in life and is the most essential thing in the training of the artist in living. Our bodies are to us what the violin is to the violinist. His aesthetic thought and imagination, his immortal longings, his technical mastery avail him but little if the violin in his hand has jangled strings or a crack in its sounding board.

The chemical laboratory and research workers in many fields of science have made available to the laymen a large and important mass of information as to right habits of living related to food, shelter and clothing. These same scientists have told us much about the laws of personal and social hygiene. Better organized community life is making it possible for all of us to have the benefits of this information.

There has never been an age when the human nervous system had to meet such a strain as at the present time. The continuous noise of automobiles, aeroplanes overhead, and in cities the cry of street hawkers, fire and ambulance whistles, moving railroad trains, all carrying on through the night as well as the day, tend to disturb and permanently impair the nervous equilibrium of the growing child and annul the wise beneficence of nature that provides a well balanced recurrence of light and darkness, sleep and awareness, relaxation and tension.

We are only beginning to understand the disturbing effect of noise even though we may be unconscious of its presence. Scientists recently called attention to this and stated that a sleeping person will register even so light a sound as someone tip-toeing by the bed.

Much of this stress and strain perhaps we can not control, but with thought and intelligent training we can individually protect ourselves from some of it. People who live in the open spaces have a great advantage that they do not always appre-



The flowing grace of curved lines may always be enjoyed in well contoured fields.

ciate in solving this, one of the most perplexing problems of the art of living.

People who live in towns and cities should select living quarters protected as much as possible from the noise and speed of city life. Sleeping quarters especially should be located in the most quiet places in the house, and rest and sleep adjusted to those hours in which nature has hushed her sounds and turned out her lights.

But nature must still be our teacher in those dangerous hours of alertness and action. Everybody around us is moving, moving rapidly and doing something. It seems to matter little to many of them where they are going or what they are doing just so they have bodily comfort, can go fast and find a thrill. This same impulse urges them on to capture an old field, to make a speed record, to patronize jazz concerts and street fairs. We too rarely seek those recreations that are less disturbing to the already tense nerves and really recreate us through the stimulation of thought and the stirring of the imagination. Thrills are not in themselves so bad, provided

we indulge ourselves in them with the same degree of abstemiousness with which nature uses her paint brush on the sky, earth, birds and animals. Thrills are contrasts and we can no more live with them continuously than we could with a sky or earth that wears always sunset colors.

But there must be some contrasts and variety in living as well as in Nature and Art. The complete life, or the nearest one may be able to approach it, must have variety and contrast if it is to give satisfaction and richness of experience. For this one must turn to the worlds of nature, art and religion. Here alone may be found escape from the everydayness of life, its stress and strain. Here one may continually replenish the sea of knowledge, thought and feeling from which all must be constantly drawing in their daily intercourse with people, if that intercourse is to mean an intelligent and sympathetic relationship to those around them.

In these worlds, one may through carefully selected reading, through the feeling for beauty in pictures, music and poetry, through communion with God and nature, find an infinite source of variety and contrast for the mind and heart to feed upon without ever knowing satiety, without the friction and strain of a speed-driven world, without the violent reactions and exhaustions of the commercialized amusements that depend almost entirely upon frequent and violent contrasts that give only thrills and stimulants for jaded minds and hearts.

Life as here suggested does not mean monotony and dullness but a well proportioned living that has repetition, variety, contrast and rhythm as nature, religion and art have taught man to use these elements of beauty from the beginning of aesthetic consciousness.

## THE RHYTHMIC ANALYSIS OF VERSE

The rhythmic structure of a few stanzas of English verse are given here in an attempt to illustrate how closely the poet's thought and feeling are bound up with his rhythmic patterns.

It is of course very difficult to satisfactorily explain rhythmic sound groups through the medium of the written word especially where the thought content of the word must be considered as well as the rhythm of the sound groups.

For the strongest accent italics are used. The spaced lettering indicates lighter accent and the spacing in the middle of the lines shows how more complicated rhythms may be broken up into simpler forms.

The rhythmic reading of poetry has little to do with scansion and the formal science of rhetoric.

In reading aloud words and syllables containing vowel sounds rich in quality especially when used with flowing, liquid consonants should not be cut short even though they may be rhythmically unaccented.

Only the first stanzas of the poems quoted are given. While there is variety and contrast in the rhythm throughout the poems the first stanza usually establishes the general pattern.

The vigorous rhythm of Browning's "Marching Along" gives a picture of the Cavalier army of King Charles that no words could ever do.

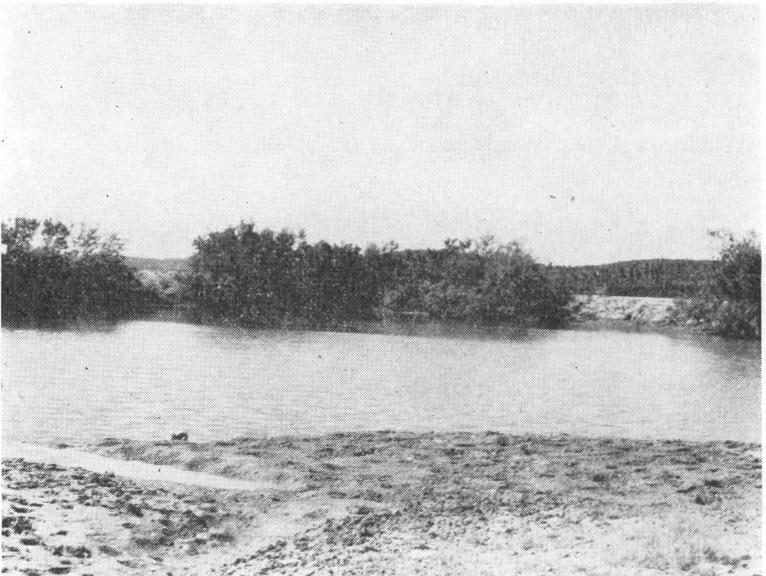
*Kentish* Sir Byng      *stood* for his King,  
Bidding the crop-headed Parliament swing;  
And *pressing* a troop      *unable* to stoop,  
And see the rogues flourish and honest folk droop,  
*Marched* them along,      *fifty* score, strong,  
*Great*-hearted gentlemen, *s i n* ging this song."

The spacing in the first, third and fifth lines indicates the phrasing that gives with the heavily first accented beat that swaggering stride of the marching cavalier. In the second, fourth and sixth lines the rhythmic accent is continued with much lighter accent and without breaking the phrase.

A fine example of how a poet may use rhythmic accent to reveal his meaning is Burns' love song, "O My Love's Like a Red, Red Rose":

"O *my* love's like a *red*, red rose  
That's newly sprung in June;  
O *my* love's like the *melodie*  
That's sweetly play'd in tune."

It is most significant that the poet has placed the phrase and the foot accent on "my," "red," and the first syllable of "melodie," and in reading these should have the strongest emphasis with everything else subordinate. Thus the poet guides us through its rhythm to an understanding of the deepest feeling in the poem—the youth's joy of possession of a sweet-heart as intense as the radiant red of the rose.



There is restful beauty in the unbroken horizontal lines of still water. The line of low trees make an harmonious background.

## SWEET AND LOW

*Sweet and low, sweet and low,  
Wind of the western sea,  
Low, low, breathe and blow,  
Wind of the western sea,  
Over the rolling waters go,  
Come from the dying moon, and blow,  
Blow him again to me;  
While my little one, while my pretty one, sleeps."*

This beautiful lullaby of Tennyson's is phrased so that the heavy accents all the way through the stanza quoted follow the mother's push of the cradle. In reading care should be taken to give the rich o sound ample time in saying the one syllable word, otherwise the short lines of two phrases become too "sing-song" and the deep emotional quality is lost.

Notice the pauses after "sea" and "me" that must be made to give time for the backward rock of the cradle.

The rhythmic phrasing extension of the last line assures one that the movement of the cradle is slower and slower until it stops as the little child falls asleep.

Mother Goose melodies and similar verse are to be enjoyed for their rhythm primarily, their imagery and humor.

They should make fun for the entire family—read aloud sung and danced together, old and young. To look for the "sense words" as a guide to reading them is absurd.



Graceful curved lines predominate in these trees.

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