

## MAGAZINE AND BOOK CLUBS, AND HOW TO MANAGE THEM.

By DORA DE BLAQUIÈRE.



BOOK and magazine clubs are associations formed with the object of buying new books or magazines by adding the members' subscriptions together, so as to constitute a common fund. They were immensely popular about twenty years ago, and did good work in that day; but at present the advance of postal facilities, and the spread of the great circulating libraries, have diminished their usefulness, and they are less needed than they were. Nevertheless, in many parts of the country they are still flourishing, and principally in those places remote from London, and not touched by the railways; and likewise in some of our distant colonies they are in great favour.

They are valuable as enabling one to procure, at a moderate cost, the book wanted; and in the same way to read the best literature at the earliest moment that it is out, if it be desired. They were rarely formed for novel-reading, the aims of their founders being usually of a higher character, and looking towards the best and most solid forms in all branches of art, science, history, and general literature. The kind of books selected would be biographies, essays, philosophy, and poetry; and amongst the authors represented would be Ruskin, Frank Buckland, and Professors Dawson and Tyndall; Whymper and Mrs. Bishop; Tennyson and Longfellow; Thoreau and Richard Jefferies; the Greville Memoirs, Prescott, Motley, and Greene. I have selected these names at random from a list of books shown to me, and should advise the intending secretary of such a club to send for catalogues to Mudie's or Smith's, and thus to get suggestions and ideas—supposing that the members of her club should need them, and have no

ideas of their own. A weekly paper, dealing solely with the reviewing of books—such as the *Athenæum*, the *Academy*, or the *Literary World*—would be of great value to the members, as well as to the secretary, and would be a means of guiding their choice, and drawing attention to the best of the new books of the day.

There are two ways of managing them—the most usual being, I think, a yearly subscription of a guinea or more, and at the end of the year the books are disposed of either amongst the members, or to a second-hand bookseller. This seems to be the general way of conducting magazine clubs; and the magazines are divided by the members at the end of the year.

The other way of managing a book club is to allow each member to choose a book, sending in three names in case of someone's selecting the same volume, the book chiefly desired being marked 1, 2, or 3 on the list, according to the member's taste. The price of each, and the name of the publisher, should also be given. Each person pays for her own volume, and generally is entitled by the rules of the society to have the first reading of the same. A book society is generally got up by some enterprising person in society who does not mind trouble; and on her shoulders fall very often the duties of secretary—a rather onerous post, as unpaid ones are often apt to be. A treasurer also is needed to receive and account for the money; and in some clubs members are restricted in price—not below three shillings, nor above half a guinea. Of course where the books are obtained at a reduction of threepence in the shilling, these prices will secure a more expensive set of books than appears on the surface, or the reduction may be used to cover the cost of postage and letter-writing.

Twenty is a very usual number to form a book club, and each member takes the books

she has selected at the end of the year; and the greatest pains are bestowed to preserve the volumes from injury, and keep them clean during the period of their use, so that they may form valuable additions to the library of the future owner. Amongst the most onerous duties of the secretary—unless she be aided by some of the members—is the covering of the books, and pasting into them the names and the rules. The covers are composed of stout brown paper, which no member is allowed to remove, as it is carefully pasted on to preserve the cover and the edges as completely as possible.

When the new books are purchased, a general meeting is held at the house of either the secretary or the treasurer, when the books are inspected and the business of covering is often performed, if there be time to do it carefully. On this occasion each member should pay for his or her book; and if there be a rule to that effect, sixpence also; which small sum is paid by each member towards the expenses of postage, paper, and wrappers. This, as I have also said, may sometimes be paid by the discount obtained on the books when bought. The time for reading each book is a fortnight. Therefore, if you have twenty members in your club, the reading of the twenty books will take nearly ten months. These arrangements all depend on the size of the club; but if too large, the work entailed on the secretary is too much to be pleasant. Members pass the books from one to the other themselves, entering on the list pasted inside the date and name, in order that it may be known that she had incurred no fine by retaining it too long.

I have a dozen lists of different book clubs. The main of them agree as to the amount of fines being fixed at one penny a day for retaining a book too long. The following is a copy of one of them:—

## THE WHITEHOUSE BOOK CLUB.

*This book to be kept one fortnight only, and to be sent on to the member next on the list.*

NAME.	WHEN RECEIVED.	WHEN FORWARDED.
Mrs. James .. ..	Dec. 7th	Dec. 21st
Mrs. Smith .. ..	Dec. 21st	..
Mrs. Hall .. ..	..	..
Mrs. Clark .. ..	..	..
Captain Lane .. ..	..	..
General Birch .. ..	..	..
Mr. John Mayen .. ..	..	..
Mr. Forster .. ..	..	..
etc.		

*Fines to be entered by the offender on this list, and paid in to Treasurer.*

*This book, after circulation, is to be retained by GENERAL BIRCH.*

The order of circulation is sometimes very puzzling indeed to arrange, and needs time and thought; for members find it more convenient to exchange the nearer they are together, of course; and care should be taken to avoid the expense of carriage on all occasions when possible.

A magazine club is conducted in much the same manner. My half-dozen lists vary one from another, some being mostly reviews, others only magazines ranging from sixpence

to one shilling and sixpence. In most of them the American magazines are included, with two or three half-crown reviews, three shilling magazines, and several sixpenny ones. The members send in a list, which is then voted upon; or each member sends in the name of a review or magazine. The W— Magazine Club consists of eight members, one guinea a year being the fee paid by each, and one dozen magazines are taken, the price of the twelve being £7—£1 8s. is thus left for postage, etc., as well as the discount taken off the magazines when purchased. The list contains one review, seven sixpenny and three shilling magazines, and two at one and sixpence each. But I only give this as a specimen. I find that it is considered best to have fewer members in a magazine club than in a book society, as the former are circulated oftener and much more trouble is entailed, the magazines being kept only one week. Magazine club rules are a little different. The following come to me from Scotland:—

#### MAGAZINE CLUB RULES.

To be kept six days—Sundays excepted—and returned to the secretary by the member who last received it. If received any day after Tuesday may be retained till the next Saturday week. Day of transfer for all maga-

zines, Saturday. One penny a day fine if kept beyond six days, unless as above. No fine to exceed sixpence. Any member wishing to see a magazine a second time, to put a cross opposite his or her name on list and apply for it to the secretary on the completion of the circulation. The magazines are allotted by ballot at the end of each year. Subscription £1 1s. yearly.

The list pasted in each magazine.

NAMES.	RECEIVED.	FORWARDED.	SUNDAY.	FINES.

The magazine club may, of course, be much smaller. Indeed, I often find that in the country it takes the shape of two or three ladies arranging to take in a certain magazine each, and exchanging them, when read, with each other. In the case of three ladies, each

has a magazine for ten days, and pays for her own. Of course, in this case, *there are no fines*. It has been a little difficult to write so as to make myself understood; but I shall be very glad if my description of these useful little clubs incites any of my readers to start one among their own circles of friends. The magazine club is specially delightful; and now that so many of our best and most able magazines are sold at sixpence, there is no difficulty in the way of those with very slender purses. In the case of families *joining*, I should recommend a selection of Sunday monthlies being put in; and also that illustrations should be thought of, as young people learn much through them, I think, and through their means take more interest in what they read.

There is no doubt that the newest, freshest work goes into our reviews and magazines to-day; and we shall find our zest in life will be enhanced, and the happiness of our home-circle increased, by the appearance of our monthly visitors in their dresses of blue or yellow, or vested only in sober brown and drab. The advent of all new ideas is calculated to keep us young in thought, and, what is still better, youthful and fresh at heart. So shall our love be larger for all good, and our sympathies wider, with every effort towards the higher ideals of life.

## FRAGRANT LEGACIES.

### CHAPTER II.

#### THE CRYSTALLISING OF FRUITS AND FLOWERS.

THE poetic industry of extracting the sweetness of flowers appeals more especially to the grown-up and refined classes of society; but who among all ages and conditions would refuse or fail to appreciate the products of Mons. Nègre's industry if they were given a chance of accepting? In fact, I felt quite mean, as I walked through his factory, when I thought of the thousands of young people who would like to have been in my place.

The fruit which grows in and about Grasse is specially beautiful; some of it will grow only in a warm and clear atmosphere such as obtains here. Among these are the fig, the *mandarin orange*, the lemon, and the Japanese medlar. These and the commoner kinds are a treat when eaten fresh; but when they have passed into their new form under the hands of Mons. and Madame Nègre they are simply irresistible.

In addition to these fruits, incredible as it may seem, the magicians dish up for us *faïry food* such as real violets, orange-flowers, and rose-leaves, which are as agreeable to the taste as, when fresh, to the smell.

For nearly three quarters of a century this firm has been engaged in its charming work, and has gained a reputation not only for the taste and beauty, but for the wholesomeness, of its sweets.

Naturally, the work in this factory is much more simple and easy to describe than the perfumery manufacture of Bruno Court, for the reason that no elaborate machinery is used here, and only two kinds of processes.

The house in which this work of crystallising is carried on is in itself a real curiosity, and well worth seeing. It is entered on one side through a small door in a narrow and sombre street, and one is quite unprepared for the magnificent prospect which opens out to view on the opposite side.

Both fruits and flowers are first of all cooked slowly in sugar and water, the latter being exceptionally good in this district, and helps to give the fruits their delicate, transparent look. They are then slowly cooled off in syrup in order to glaze them; and we noticed that the

syrup used for cooking was not available for the process known as glazing.

Passing through the store-room, where a few people were engaged in packing the finished stock for export, we came into the cooking room, or kitchen, as it might really be called, where a low range occupied one end, and the greater portion of the remaining space was taken up by rows and piles of red earthenware pans filled with every variety of fruit, violets, orange-flower, and rose-leaves all cooling down in syrup, and presenting such a tempting display as fairly made one's mouth water.

We asked Madame Nègre, who kindly accompanied us, as to the quantities of fruit and flowers consumed by them; but she could give us no information on this point beyond saying that eight or nine thousand kilos of apricots and plums are preserved every season, and about the same quantity of other fruits, such as figs and strawberries, etc., making in all about eighteen thousand kilos, or, roughly speaking, nearly forty thousand pounds.

All fruits must first be cooked, as I have said, slowly in sugar and water; and it is necessary that the sugar be of the very best quality. This being done, the man-cook ladles the fruit slowly out on to a wire netting over a table, where it is carefully examined by girls, who remove every imperfect one, no matter how slight the imperfection, leaving only those without crack or blemish to cool and drain. After this they are glazed or crystallised; and as two syrups are used both for fruits and flowers, the process is somewhat long.

When the glaze is dry, and does not come off on being touched, it is a sign that the fruit is ready for use, and it will be found that in the process to which the fruit has been subjected it has suffered no detriment, the juice has not dried up in the least, neither does the most delicate fruit lose its flavour or brilliancy.

Seeing lovely fruit placed on one side owing, perhaps, to a slight crack in the skin, I wanted to know what became of it, and found it was made into *household jam*, with just the same care and ingredients as are used in the crystallising of the fruit; indeed, so good is it that it is eagerly sought after and bought up.

The manner of cooking violets for eating is

slightly different, these being cooked in sugar only; and great care is needed to have the exact quantity of sugar—just so much and no more; then the violets are taken into an adjoining room heated by pipes, where they are left twelve hours on a wire-covered table to drain and crystallise.

These gridiron tables enable the workers to detect in a moment any imperfect specimen, which is at once removed. All the violets are brought in from the environs—that is to say, from the gardens of Grasse, Cannes, Nice, and Bordighera, where the culture of the orange, the rose, and the Parma violet has become a very lucrative industry. The peasant flower-farmers contract to give the firm the same quantity every year.

The sweet chestnut, which grows abundantly in and about Grasse, holds quite a prominent place among the crystallised fruits, and having passed through the transformation scene, is known as *marron glacé*. It requires only three days to arrive at perfection, and the same syrup in which it is cooked serves to crystallise it.

There are no duties in England on these fruits, though there are on alcoholic perfumes such as are produced by Bruno Court. As Madame Nègre laughingly said, "*Sugar and fruit* seemed a more natural and pleasing combination than flowers and fat;" and yet we reminded her of the exquisite result of this apparently incongruous blend.

The home of these magicians is, as I have said, quaint and curious enough to set it apart from ordinary houses; and surely the transformation imposed on every flower and fruit that finds its way within its portal is not to be surpassed in any fairy story, and the beauty of it all is, that nothing so transformed loses anything of its beauty and wholesomeness.

Both here and at Bruno Court's success has been obtained, and a reputation made by thoroughness, skill, and patience, urged to the exercise of these qualities by the incessant need of meeting the ever-increasing demands for their stores.

From Cannes to Grasse is but a short railway journey, and a day spent amid its beauty and quaintness, together with a sight of the poetic industries carried on within it, would be a day to remember always. EMMA BREWER.