EVENING SESSION.

The Institute met at 7:30 p. m. C. H. Everett in the chair.
Mandolin solo—Mr. William Bowman.

CARE OF HOUSE PLANTS.

R. J. COE, Ft. Atkinson, Wis.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen:—Sometimes public-spirited men lay out and plant parks—plant them with beautiful flowers where the public can go and see them—where people who do not have the opportunities of having flowers in their own grounds or their own yards, may go and see the beautiful things of nature. Again, people sometimes build large greenhouses for the purpose of growing flowers; we may go to these greenhouses and purchase flowers for our friends and for ourselves. But what to me is of a great deal more importance, and the subject we are to consider for a few minutes this evening, is the care of house plants for the home. It is of more value to us, because there we may see them every day of the year, because we can put care into them, and enjoy them very much more than we can if any other hand is caring for them. Then, again, if we have flowers in our own homes, you know there are many, many times when we can take a basket or a bouquet of flowers to our friends on joyful or on sad occasions, and such flowers carry with them much more meaning than the flowers that we purchase, because we have put our care, our attention, and our love into them; so for a few minutes we will consider this subject of flowers for the home, and how best to care for them. I wish I knew myself how best to care for them, but there are a few points that may possibly help some to have a little better success with their house plants.

The Best Soil.

The first thing to be considered is the soil. You know the farmer, when he wants to grow a good crop, wants his soil in the right condition, not only to contain a good deal of fertility, but in the right mechanical condition. In putting out their house-plants, many people never think of this part, but will go into the garden or anywhere to get the soil for their house plants. To get the best results we must have a porous soil. We know that with some kinds of soil, the more it is cultivated and worked, the more compact it becomes, and garden soil is very apt to be of that kind. If we live near a piece of timber, we may go in there and get what is called leaf mould, which is made by decaying vegetable matter. This soil is full of plant food, and it is in the right mechanical condition, as well. If we cannot get that, we may, to a certain extent, make the soil. Now, how shall we get at it? Suppose we make a compost, one-third good, clean, sharp sand, one-third good garden soil, and one-third from the compost heap. This gives us a fertile soil, with the elements of growth in it, and a porous soil, as well.
Watering Our House Plants.

The next subject that has the most difficulty in it is the subject of watering our plants. We must remember that they are in artificial circumstances, we must remember that some of these plants grow naturally in cold climates, and some in tropical climates. It is manifest that if we put them all in one window and give them all the same treatment, that some of them will fail. We must remember too, that in the winter time, when we want the house plants to grow and blossom, that it is the time they really need the least water, because in the months of December and January, and particularly when the days are short and the nights are long and we are very likely to have cloudy weather, of course, there is not so great an amount of evaporation, and we should be a little careful about overwatering our plants, or the soil will become water-logged, and you cannot expect good results. Now, how can we tell about that? Well, that is another hard thing to answer, but I suppose that most of you have noticed that in handling your flower pots they sometimes feel very heavy, and if you happen to strike them, you receive back a dull thud or sound. If you do that, stop and think a moment, and you will realize that there is too much water present in that soil, but, when, by striking the flower pot, there is a sort of ring, then you know that the soil is drying out, and should have a little more water. But we should always study the conditions of our plants, and some plants require a good deal more water than others, but a thoroughly water soaked soil is not good for our plants to grow in and they will not long thrive under such conditions.

Sunshine and Light.

Sometimes people say they cannot grow house plants because they have no sunny window. I am sometimes almost inclined to think that the people who have not the sunny windows have the best success. Of course, there are certain classes of plants that must have sunshine, all plants must have light, but a good many plants will grow without bright sunshine, and a good many will do better without it. Suppose, for instance, you expect to grow some of the bulbs, hyacinths, narcissus, crocuses, tulips. We must remember that these plants naturally grow and blossom early in the spring, during cool weather, and when we naturally have a good deal of rain. Let us give them just these same conditions. Of course, they must have some preparation. We must grow the roots in flower pots before they are brought to the light, and then we may put them in a north window where they will never see the sunshine, and still they will blossom and give us lots of flowers.

The Chrysanthemum.

There is another class of plants that we may grow without sunshine, that naturally blossom when the weather is cool and we have a good deal of rain and not much sunshine, only it is at the other end of the season, in the fall, and that is the queen of autumn, the chrysanthemum. In order to get a good many blossoms, they should be planted out of doors, in good, rich garden soil in the spring. Let them grow and take good care of them, and along about the middle of July, pinch off the ends of the new growth, so as to make them grow stocky. Then when the buds begin to form in the fall, take them up and put them; put them on the north side of a building where they are in the shade, and water them, and if you will watch, it won't take long to discover that the chrysanthemum is a thirsty fellow and likes water. A good, healthy chrysanthemum plant will take a quart of water every day, and must have it to do its very best. Now, when they become well established and growing well, the buds begin to swell and they want something more. If you have
watched them closely, you have perhaps discovered that your plants need a little fertilizer, and they will take more and care for it, and pay for it too, than any plant that I know anything about.

**Primroses.**

There is another plant that will grow well in the east window, or the west window, or the north window, and give us blossoms all winter long. I refer to the primrose. They do not need sunshine. I have seen very much finer ones grown in north windows than in south windows, but remember they must have light and plenty of water, and they will give you plenty of flowers.

**DISCUSSION.**

Mr. Arnold—Would you advise putting some crockery or something, in the bottom of the pot, and would you have a hole in the bottom of the pot?

Mr. Coe—Of course, I would advise having a hole in the bottom of the pot, but I could never see any good in putting in crockery, or anything of that sort.

Mr. Hill—I found that my chrysanthemums were subject to little lice, last summer.

Mr. Coe—Yes, the chrysanthemum has one insect, the black Aphis. When you get a chrysanthemum from the green house, you usually find a few of those fellows on it, and they increase very rapidly. It is very wise to find out whether they have them before you put the plants in the house. The best way I know to get rid of them is to put a sugar barrel over the plant and put in a pan with some coals and smoke them out with tobacco smoke. The same treatment will kill these common, little green lice that are often found on house plants.

Mr. Briggs—Is there any danger of getting too much tobacco smoke?

Mr. Coe—I don’t think so. Of course, you can ruin the plants by getting too much fire.

Mr. Briggs—How would it do to smoke a cigar in the house, or in the room where they are?

Mr. Coe—That would be all right, if you get under the barrel.

Mr. Convey—How do you cultivate house plants?

Mr. Coe—Usually with a fork, a common table fork will do all right, anything to stir it up so the surface will dry out quickly and put it in good condition.

Mr. Hoxie—When you have these lice on the chrysanthemum, it is a good plan to wet your plants with tobacco water and then as a last resort, smoke the plants—that will surely kill them. How do you keep your chrysanthemums through the winter?

Mr. Coe—I simply put them in a cellar with some light, and water them about once a month. I cut the tops off when I put them in the cellar. In the spring set them out and take care of them like any other plant. The pot will be full of sprouts; take them out and divide them; put one in a place, and by fall they will be great, bushy plants.

Mr. Hoxie—Do you have any success in making slips along in June?

Mr. Coe—that is a little bit late. I should prefer to put them out early in May.

Mr. Hoxie—I mean slips, not roots.

Mr. Coe—Oh, yes, you can do that, but that is rather a short season.

Mr. Kellogg—What treatment would you recommend for house roses?

Mr. Coe—I never had much experience with them. I know this much, that in an ordinary living room the temperature is too high and too dry. All plants require a good deal of moisture in the air, and one great trouble with house plants, particularly where the room is heated with coal, is that the air is too dry. There should be water standing on the stove to evaporate and give the plants moisture.