

number is occupied with fiction. Attractive wood-cuts meet the eye, which are placed at the head of columns to illustrate the tragical tales which follow. These are the sketches which draw the attention of youth and inflame their imagination. The desire for this description of reading increases with every gratification of it. Those only who have been addicted to novel reading can appreciate the full extent of the fascination. Soon the desire becomes a ruling passion. Like the dram-drinker or the opium eater, the poor victim has no rest till he obtains his favorite supply, and then he finds it affords him no real satisfaction; it but augments his misery. He wishes, but on his wishes other vain wishes grow. The novel reader is a man of uneasiness and discontent: he possesses a continual hankering after some thing, he himself scarcely knows what. He resorts to his customary fiction, but he is still unhappy.

"Young Harter read these tales, and he was seized with a desire for deeds of daring. He felt himself to be in a new world. Being naturally of a lively imagination, and an excitable temperament, his mind was filled with a morbid sentimentality, and a mock heroism. He soared in a region of fancy, and breathed an atmosphere of fiction. He read of thefts, and forgeries, and robberies, and murders,—of men who abandoned the influences of home, and sought their fortunes in foreign lands. The scenes they passed through deeply interested him. Why should he not do some thing to distinguish himself? His ardent nature longed for a sphere of action. He was poor, and he must possess himself of the necessary means; he committed a forgery in the name of his uncle, and raised money to take him to California. He set out on his journey, but squandered the whole before he left his native State. Through the forbearance of the uncle, and the kindness of other friends, he was admitted back into the neighbourhood, and the difficulty was adjusted. Soon after he hired a span of horses at a livery stable, and travelled to a distance, with a view to selling them. He was overtaken, and the horses were returned. The interposition of friends once more saved him; but partly with a desire to escape the scene of his disgrace, and partly with the object of seeking his fortune and gratifying his love of adventure, he made up his mind to come over into Canada. It was arranged that his cousin Morgan Doxstater, a son of the above mentioned uncle, should accompany him; and in May last the two crossed over to a place called Rockport on the Canadian shore, and made their way to the vicinity of Farmersville, County of Leeds. Here they obtained employment with a farmer; but Harter, having acquired a dislike towards Doxstater, conceived the plan of murdering him, and sinking his body in the Charleston Lake, a few miles distant. The known causes of the dislike were so trivial, and the incentives to the bloody deed so slight, that many surmises were indulged in, and several extravagant stories were put into circulation, as to the connexion of the two with other crimes which this was intended to conceal. Harter and his friends persistently denied all such imputations, with the exceptions of the forgery and the theft already specified. I visited him in his cell on an average four times a week, during the six weeks of his confinement after he received his sentence, and he never could account satisfactorily for the crime, or assign any adequate motive for it. He said he seemed to be performing some heroic deed, whose appalling nature he could not realize, and he perpetrated it with a hilarity of spirits and a completeness in the execution, which can scarcely be accounted for in so young a person, on any principle other than the influence of fiction upon his mind. He concluded it would be but to get rid of his cousin, but he never thought of abandoning him secretly, and thus leaving him to shift for himself,—he thought it would be a great achievement, a fine adventure, to dispose of him on the lonely shores of the romantic Charleston Lake, and thrust him beneath the smooth waters!

"He shot him through the head as the cousin sat in the boat, and this shot not proving fatal—for Doxstater was able to sit up after the shot, and converse with Harter about the "accident," as the one pretended, and the other supposed it to be—he sprang upon the shore and seized a club, with which he fractured the skull, and laid his cousin's body lifeless in the water. But I need not detail the incidents connected with this tragedy, already familiar to most readers. Poor Harter paid a terrible penalty for his crime, and fully acknowledged the justness of the law which demanded his execution. Suffice it to say here, that by means of the sacred Scriptures, religious conversation, and prayer, he was brought to a sense of his condition, and gave evidence of a moral change. I spent the greater part of the night with him before his execution, and attended him on the scaffold, and I have little doubt but that his contrition was sincere. At his request I wrote to his mother, giving a full account of my visits to him, and the particulars of the execution; to which letter I received such an acknowledgment as must have elicited sympathy in any breast with the heart-broken mother.

"The case of Harter teaches an instructive lesson. The young should learn from it to avoid the *New York Ledger*, and novels in

general. But for the influence of these baneful works, so far as can be judged by man, Edgar E. Harter might have been still living, and respected in society. We know not that any other instrumentalities would have been potent enough to destroy those moral safeguards which religion had thrown around him. This paper is prepared with the hope that the fate of Harter may prove a warning to others. 'Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall.' Though the instances in which such dreadful results may be traced to novel-reading, may be comparatively few, who can estimate the amount of mischief, directly and indirectly inflicted upon society by these publications! Multitudes have been led to enter upon a wandering course of life, - instability in industrial pursuits, fickleness of purpose, and the most wretchedly loose mental habits, are directly connected with the practice of perusing fiction. It is fatal to piety in every instance, and its effects upon the cause of education are incalculably deleterious. A novel reader can never be a successful student. Mental discipline, so necessary to the attainment of eminence in letters, and so much induced too by a thorough course of literary training, is impossible where the taste for fiction has become formed.

"Yet Christian parents have these works on their parlor tables, and place them in the hands of their children—perhaps to be in the fashion—and religious men engaged in the book-trade sell them, because there is profit from the sale, and their customers must be accommodated! The moral responsibility of those who manufacture and those who vend such trash to feed the intellect of the young can not be over estimated. All classes who have abandoned themselves to the practice of perusing these light articles are objects of commiseration. The aged as well as the young are the slaves of this appetite. By all the considerations of personal happiness here and hereafter, by the fearful consequences of their example upon the rising generation, and by the desire to promote mental culture, and disseminate religious information throughout the community, let all who are tinctured with the evil discard it at once and forever.

"*Montreal, 14th March, 1861.*"

2. SUGGESTIONS FOR HOUSEHOLD LIBRARIES.

There are several questions connected with the purchase of books for a Household Library, which are worthy of consideration. Every head of a family, it may be presumed in this period of general intelligence, is desirous to possess for his wife, his children, and for himself, a certain number of well-selected books. A book-case is in fact an indispensable article of furniture. All have books of some kind or other. How shall they be best chosen, and purchased to the best advantage?

The ordinary condition under which the books in a house are brought together, may be described as a chance medley. They are selected on no system, and, consequently, when the immediate occasion of their perusal has gone by, have very little value. What a different story is told in a glance at the well-constructed book-case of a gentleman or lady who has given a little of the attention to the choice of its contents which would be bestowed upon the selection of the pattern of a window-curtain or a sofa. Yet books are the most telling furniture which can be placed in a room. Every visitor of intelligence is immediately irresistibly attracted to the perusal of their titles; and an opinion is formed at once from them, of the taste and cultivation of the family. Pictures and Engravings are getting to be generally appreciated, and, next to a picture on a wall, in point of interest and effect, is the book on the centre-table or the shelf. How deplorable and chilling a dull collection! The reader may recall the anecdote of Dr. Johnson at the house of the eminent virtuoso, Mr. Cambridge. He was there one day in company with Sir Joshua Reynolds, and had no sooner, says Boswell, made his bow, than he ran eagerly to one side of the room to inspect the books on the shelves. "He runs to the books," says the artist, "as I do to the pictures." There he was gratified, for his host was a man of exquisite taste. How cheerful and inviting the friendly names of good authors and long-established favorites, reviving a hundred pleasing recollections of past enjoyment as you approach them! A man, says the old proverb, is known by his companions. How true is this of the companions of our better hours of ease and retirement, the volumes which we keep at hand, the solace and amusement of our cares, the impulses of our nobler actions.

All persons, we have no doubt, would have a choice collection of books in preference to a comparatively indifferent and valueless one. But all have not the time or opportunity to make the selection. It is not an easy thing to make a tasteful gathering of any objects—the plants for your garden, the china for your table, the clothes for yourself or your children—in fine, of whatever is thrust before us in heaps, the common and worthless of course preponderating. There is money enough spent annually in the country upon tasteless