

A PLEA FOR OUR READING CIRCLES.*

BY MR. FRANK CRASSWELLER.

MIND culture may be obtained by travel and observation, by contact with minds superior to our own, or by an intimate knowledge of the best thoughts of the greatest men. Owing to the lack of money and time, especially the former, travel is practically out of the reach of a majority of teachers, but culture by means of books is within the reach of all.

Mind culture is a necessity of the present age. For self-preservation and advancement it is as essential to-day to cultivate the mind, as in the Middle Ages it was to cultivate the body. The man whose intellect has been trained to think keenly and closely, and whose mind has been broadened and sympathies deepened by extended reading and observation, is so notoriously the successful (using the word in its highest sense) man of the day that I should not have referred to the necessity of mind culture at all, had I not been told by teachers who refused to join a circle that they did not care to do so, as they did not intend to teach more than a year or two. The time when lack of mental ability was no bar to office or promotion has passed or is passing away, and the day is dawning when in order to compete successfully with rivals in the race of life it will be necessary to use every means in our power to improve our reasoning and observing powers. And if it is necessary that we, as individuals, should improve our minds, how much more necessary that we as teachers should do so. The teacher whose knowledge of the subject is

limited to the matter in the text-book before him loses more than half his power. He who would teach even the simplest subject with all the success his ability deserves, must be able to see it from all points and in all its phases—not with the spectacles of only one man (spectacles, which perhaps, give but a dim view of the matter), but with the lenses of other thinkers and observers—that it may appear to him in all its varied phases, and that he may thoroughly understand it. He must be able to draw from the stores of his memory illustrations to make the subject plainer and more interesting. He must have also boundless enthusiasm for his work, and this I hold can only come from a full knowledge of what he is to teach, and of the benefits to be derived from that which he is teaching. In order, therefore, to be a successful teacher, one must not be contented with the mere work required for his examination, but must, chiefly by reading, gather in knowledge of all kinds. He must also be able to assimilate this knowledge, and by cultivating the thinking faculty winnow the grain from the chaff, and store it up for future use to be of assistance to him in his work. Do the majority of teachers do this? My answer must be in the negative. Not that we lack conscientious teachers, who spend much of their time in self-improvement to the benefit of themselves and their schools, but because many enter the profession with the intention of remaining only a year or two; and many, too many I am sorry to say, having taken a Second or a First Class Certificate, deem their educa-

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