

a corner left somewhere for some poetical sentiments. But here it is necessary to select. To read even Tennyson, Longfellow, Whittier or Browning page by page is tiring in the extreme. To criticise our poets may be a dangerous pursuit. But it is clear that while poetical authors have given us much which is sublime, not a little is to be found in their works which would be simply considered rubbish were it not that a great man had written it. It is wise to take only the best pieces, where the whole soul of the poet shines forth, and master these.

The greatest care should be observed in selecting works of Fiction. The mass of volumes in this class is of a debilitating and destructive character. The mind is enslaved by passion or untruth. False ideas of life are awakened. The mind is familiarized with crime and follies until all the moral stamina is gone. The French nation is a terrible instance of the demoralizing effects of an overheated and distorted fictitious literature. How morally fragrant are the works of Walter Scott, or George Eliot, or Louise Alcott, and a host of others which might be named! A man arises from the witness of the deeds of their imaginary heroes, with a lordly ambition and stimulated faith. And this class alone can assist the up-raising of the morals and practices of society.

It is impossible in a brief article to more than throw out a hint or two on this widely extended topic. Our readers must be left to work out the suggestion at their leisure. But we are sure our opinions will find at least some consideration at the hands of those who find recreation in reading. Saxon literature transmitting Saxon ideas is the best pabulum for Saxon minds. German literature has its attractions for many minds. But the works of Germany are not the best food for those who think and speak in English. French and Spanish works must very largely be avoided, as they transmit the most damaging views of personal, social, domestic life. But in our own language there may be found noble works which will enlarge our sentiment, broaden our charity, stimulate our poetry, and strengthen our morals.

A word more. Our schools and colleges have not sufficiently regarded this important branch of study. Though the many works of good repute cannot be all perused at school, a taste may be developed and strengthened for literary studies which will confer a positive delight on after and older years. "As the twig is bent, the tree's inclined" is a proverbial truth. If from our school and college halls a love for literature be borne away by the retiring student, we doubt not that the fire thus kindled will be fanned in still higher flames of research. Many firesides are positively indignant of such recreating pursuits; what wonder then that many of the members drift away into scenes and practices the most questionable. Let a good and judicious study of the literature of our mother-tongue be engendered at our schools, and continued at our houses, and our business, and home-life cannot but be enriched thereby.—*London Advertiser.*

PLEASANT READING.

The English *Rock* newspaper says:—"The late Bishop Wilberforce, during the forty years of his active ecclesiastical life, collected all the pamphlets that came in his way, relating to the controversies of the busy days in which he lived. These were always arranged from year to year, and carefully indexed by his own hand; and they went on accumulating until at the time of his death, they mustered a formidable phalanx of no fewer than 175 thick, 8vo. volumes, all of which had inscribed on their blue morocco backs, the particular date to which they belonged. Not only is the series quite invaluable to the controversial student, but its interest is frequently enhanced by the circumstance, that a large proportion of the pamphlets, being presentation copies, carry the autograph of the writers. At the Bishop's sale there was a spirited competition for this lot, which was eventually knocked down to Mr. Sotheran, of the Strand, from whom it has been purchased (for £100) by the National Club. We heartily congratulate the Club on the acquisition of so unique a prize, which, we believe, will occupy a berth in the committee-room, where the very important library presented by the late Robert McGhee, is already established."

CHANGES IN LANGUAGE.

In one of Mr. Motley's scholarly addresses he mourned over the fact that a language was never perfect until it was dead. If King Alfred should come back to earth, for instance, he would probably not understand a word spoken in his kingdom. While a language is growing there is no accounting for the grotesque forms which words will take. Pocket-handkerchief, for instance, is an absurd mass of syllables for a little thing in common use. It began growing centuries ago. Kerchief is *couvre-chef*, a head covering; then it began to be carried in the hand, for obvious purposes, and at last was put in the pocket, gathering cumbrous additions to its name all the way. How much more sensible to call it as the French do, a *mouchoir*,

or wiper? The only objection to this would be the temptation afforded to low punsters, who would warn you whenever you put your mouchoir in your breast-pocket not to take a wiper to your bosom.

BOOKS FOR BOYS.

To the boy the printing-press has become the shaping influence of our time. Father and mother may be voted unsympathetic and slow. Comrades may show themselves arrogant and mean. Sisters may not be above temptation in the way of small tempers, tale-bearing, or fibs. But the friends in the story-books are all that the most exacting boy could desire. If they have weaknesses these are not visited on him, and he forgives them all sins but tediousness. He thinks their thoughts, speaks with their speech, sees with their eyes, adopts their conscience. Lesson-books are alien, to be respected or despised as the case may be. But story-books are bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh.

Yet not one conscientious Christian parent in ten troubles himself to see what books and papers his boy reads for pastime. Thus a free market opens to enormous supplies of profitless or poison literature. Not to speak of those prurient publications which, at least, do not lie open on news-stands or heap the shelves of reputable book-stores, there is a class of boys' books and papers hardly less menacing to morals and a thousand times more widely read.

Good Jacob Abbott with his model "Rollo," his amiable "Marco Paulo," and his preternatural "Jonas;" dear old Gaffer Day with his innocent "Sandford and Merton;" sweet Mary Howitt with her whole delightful library of stories; clever Miss Edgeworth, and, alas! even great Sir Walter; these and their gentle kindred who delighted the young world twenty years ago are shoved aside by bustling and coarse "Oliver Optic," "Walter Aimwell," Pierce Egan, and the evil brood of authors of "Boys of America," and "The Boys' Own." We have doubted, indeed, whether "Robinson Crusoe" and "Settlers in Canada" might not be out of print, since we heard a bright lad of sixteen declare that "Plutarch's Lives" was too slow to interest a boy of spirit, though that is the book to which the great Napoleon, who is thought to have had a reasonable taste for adventure, gave his school-boy days and nights.

According to this modern literature there is an experience called "life" wholly distinct from and incompatible with that simple existence which the home roof covers. Indeed, the youth whose noble aspiration impels him toward this joy of eventful living must begin by running away from home. Previously he will have shown the mark of his high calling by bullying his teachers and superiors, breaking up the school, perhaps, deceiving father and mother, and telling what white lies may be necessary to his large ends. Having thrown off the tyranny of loving-kindness he enters on the liberty of the street, the fore-castle, the frontier, the mines, or the forge. His companions are low-lived criminals. His ambition is the vulgar genteel. Everybody about him commits more than the seven deadly sins, but he remains a Bayard of spotlessness, delightfully reckless, picturesquely rollicking, always ready, one against ten, to floor the most dangerous "enemies," always loftily superior to circumstances, and, in the end, marrying the rich girl and setting up as a patron of the virtues; the inevitable moral being that the wilder the boy and the coarser his surroundings, the more admirable and successful will be the man.

The whole philosophy of even the best of these productions is false, their style is tawdry, their language ungrammatical, their atmosphere mephitic, and yet they are interesting. As the Greek youth heard the legends of Homer and was kindled to emulation of the triumphant gods and heroes, so the American boy pores over the "Adventures of Jack Harkaway," or the "Starry Flag Series," and daily sets up newer and shabbier images in his motley Pantheon. As a lad thinketh in his heart, so is he. The reader of these epics coarsens, his speech is garnished with cheap slang, the pitch he handles slowly defiles him. When Fifth Avenue and the Five Points hang delighted over the same literature, admire the same heroes, form themselves, more or less consciously, upon the same models, it is not because the Five Points have heard anything about sweetness and light.

In the distorted mirror of these prints every moral quality looks awry. Thrift is stinginess. Obedience is mean-spiritedness. Extravagance is open-handedness. Bluster and brag are manliness. Patriotism is the doctrine of Manifest Destiny. In the late Cuban excitement those students of "The Boys' Own" or "Oliver Optic" were few, who did not long to "lick Spain," declaring that a Spaniard was "too mean to live," that Cuba was rightfully ours, and that peace was disgraceful. Neither the sufferings of the patriots nor the cruelties of the volunteers were an appreciable factor in the sum of their conclusions. Not one boy in fifty took the pains to know the facts before fulminating this bloody ultimatum. It was the brute thirst for conquest, stimulated by a false notion of the glory of victory, which their reading had taught them.—*Christian Union.*