

him, will naturally be desirous of availing himself of the opportunity afforded by a mechanics' or literary institution for obtaining the knowledge and information of which he may stand in need in order to be enabled to fulfil the duties of his profession with credit and profit to himself and satisfaction to his employer.

Professedly, these institutions are founded on the most liberal principles; but what does the young Catholic find them to be in practice? He very soon discovers that their liberality is of a very lopsided kind. The "guiding spirits," generally speaking, are men whose minds are imbued with gross anti-Catholic prejudices; who entertain the utmost contempt for Catholic principles and usages, who speak with scorn of the Catholic writings and practices of the middle ages, and who are continually instituting the most invidious comparisons between those "dark ages" and the present times when the full blaze of intellectual light is so generally diffused amongst the people. (Though unfortunately, the testimony of Sheriff Alison before a committee of the House of Commons is somewhat contradictory to the latter theory. Speaking of the City of Glasgow, the birth-place of mechanics' institutions—for it was here that Dr. Birkbeck laid their first foundation—he says, "I am sure that there are eighty thousand people in Glasgow who are just as completely heathens to all intents and purposes as the Hottentots of Africa;" and "that there are ten thousand men in Glasgow who get drunk on Saturday night; who are drunk all Sunday, and are in a state of intoxication, or half-intoxication all Monday, and go to work on Tuesday." Is not this appalling spectacle of mental and moral degradation, witnessed in the nineteenth century in a city of "moral, religious, and intellectual Scotland," totally unparalleled in the history of the "dark ages;" the profound investigations of Scotch philosophical historians notwithstanding.) The lecturers engaged to enlighten and instruct the members are often mere literary charlatans, who, with unblushing impudence discuss and profess to fathom the deeply religious motives of the writers and other eminent men of Catholic times, and ignorantly compare a mean and unprincipled statesman, as was Bacon; a cruel, blood-thirsty, and bigoted usurper, like Cromwell; or an intolerant fanatic, such as Wesley, to a St. Louis, a St. Anselm, a St. Bernard, or a St. Francis. And whilst the former are eulogised and held up to admiration as sages, heroes, and apostles, the latter are stigmatised as ignorant and superstitious devotees or mad-brained enthusiasts. Such is a sample of the opinions promulgated and the mental ailment offered to the young Catholic in these institutions. Their libraries, too, abound in works of a most objectionable character both as to faith and morals; and history, as you have truly observed, a branch

of knowledge of peculiar importance to Catholics has become in the hands of most of their popular writers for the last three centuries, "one huge lie!" as a competent authority has so truthfully expressed it. In a collection of ten or twelve thousand volumes, which some of them possess, not more than half-a-dozen or a dozen Catholic authors are to be found. No branch of literature or department of science can escape the virulent bigotry of their writers. And an essay on logic, a treatise on practical mechanics, or a description of a work of art, equally become in the hands of their ingenious author a text-book against "Popery,"

The consequence is that the young and unsuspecting Catholic aspirant after knowledge is deluded by their specious fallacies; and confiding in their ostentations, though bastard liberality, he is induced to place credit in the oft-repeated and to him, plausible statements that are made to the discredit of the Catholic religion, and he discovers perhaps too late, that his religious principles have been undermined, and that his faith has been destroyed; in fact, that "asking for bread they had given him a stone; and when he had sought for a fish, they had reached him a serpent."

That this is no groundless imagining, my own experience, and that of others I could point out is sufficient proof. I have known not a few Catholic young men of the working class who were at one time remarkable for their strict attention to their religious duties; who regularly approached the sacraments, and afforded an edifying example to their friends and companions by their devout and regular deportment, but who, alas! on becoming connected with pseudo-literary institutions, and forming intimacies with the frequenters of such societies, have fallen from their high estate and have become a source of inquietude to their families, of regret and sorrow to their pastors, and a scandal to their brethren in the Faith. Instead of attending the services of the Church and the sacraments, and promoting the advance of religion and good of their fellow-creatures, they become frequenters of the debating class of the tavern, wasting their talents in forwarding objects of questionable if not of injurious tendency, and instead of good Christians and useful citizens, they have degenerated into wrangling word-splitters or pot-house politicians.

Is it, then, surprising that mechanics' institutions have been in ill repute with many learned and excellent persons, whose suspicions and distrust of their reputed advantages have been fully justified on beholding such deplorable results as I have endeavored to describe. Of their beneficial effects when founded on sound Catholic principles, and under the patronage or direction of the Clergy, no reasonable doubt can be entertained; and of this fact you have given at least one instance, on the most