THE WEEK.

Ninth Year.
Vol. IX., No. 15.

TORONTO, FRIDAY, MARCH 11th, 1892.

$3.00 per Annum.
Single Copies, 10 Cents.

THE WEEK:

AN INDEPENDENT JOURNAL OF POLITICS, LITERATURE, SCIENCE AND ART

TERMS:—One year, $3.00: eight months, $2.00; four months, $1.00 Subscriptions payable *in advance*.

Subscribers in Great Britain and Ireland supplied, postage prepaid on terms following:—One year, 12s. stg.; half-year, 6s. stg. Remittances by P.O. order or draft should be made payable and addressed to the Publisher.

ADVERTISEMENTS, unexceptionable in character and limited in number, will be taken at $4.00 per line per annum; $2.50 per line for six months; $1.50 per line for three months; 20 cents per line per insertion for a shorter period.

No advertisements charged less than five lines. Address—T. R. CLOUGHER, *Business Manager, 5 Jordan Street, Toronto.*

European Agents—SMITH, AINSLIE & Co., 25 Newcastle Street, Strand, London.

C. BLACKETT ROBINSON, *Publisher.*

CONTENTS OF CURRENT NUMBER.

All articles, contributions, and letters on matters pertaining to the editorial department should be addressed to the Editor, and not to any person who may be supposed to be connected with the paper.

THE Toronto Public Library is one of the civic institutions of which the city may be justly proud, or, which is perhaps a better compliment, it is one of those which is quietly and without much observation, doing a steady and persistent work for the general weal. The quiet forces in society, as in nature, are often the most potent as well as the most beneficent in the long run. No one can read the Eighth Annual Report of this Library without feeling that its influence must be considerable in shaping the thought and moulding the character of the large numbers of people, especially of the young, who have access so freely to its volumes. Grant that a very large proportion of the volumes drawn and read are of the lighter class, and that works of fiction predominate to an undue extent. It is, we venture to affirm, vastly better that young people, and all other people, should read fiction, even fiction of a comparatively inferior character, so long as it is not low or vicious, than that they should read nothing. Apart even from the probability, which is always considerable, that the trivial or sentimental tale may prove a stepping-stone on which the mind rescued by it from utter vacuity or worse may rise to higher things, it is better that the imagination should be occupied with the lightest fancies, or busied with the impossible exploits of the most unreal of heroes and heroines, than that it should be left to be overrun with noxious weeds or made the cesspool for things foul and vile. So much in anticipation of the trite objections based upon the indications of uncultivated literary taste afforded by the classes of books mostly in demand. But facts are always more convincing than theories, and it is gratifying to perceive that theory is in this case well supported by facts. The fact that the number of books drawn from the circulating department during the past year shows an increase of over ten per cent. above that of the preceding year, indicates that the reading habit is growing by that on which it feeds. The further fact that there has been during the last six years a steady decrease in the percentage of works of fiction issued—that percentage having fallen from 66.5 to 53.1 per cent. in the period named—is a still more gratifying indication of an upward tendency in literary taste among the patrons of the Library. "These figures amply justify," says the Report, "the conclusions at which older library boards have arrived, that there is a progressive character in mental culture which is imparted by a taste for reading and which can be fostered by supplying freely the best literature." The total number of books taken out during the year 1891 was 427,347. One needs to think over these figures for a few moments in order to gain even an approximate conception of what they may fairly be supposed to mean in relation to educational influence. After making every allowance for waste they represent a sum total of information gained, impressions made and mental stimulus imparted, such as we have no means of estimating, but which must be very considerable. Amongst the tables given in the Report, those showing the classified circulation of books issued during the year are specially interesting. First come, as a matter of course, the 53.1 per cent. of works of fiction. Next in order are books for juvenile readers, to the extent of 13.7 per cent.; then books of reference, 7.3 per cent.; periodicals and magazines, 4.3 and 3.9 per cent., respectively; general literature, geography and travel, and history, 3.1, 2.7 and 2.3 per cent. The showing in the sciences, arts, philosophies, etc., are disappointing until one remembers that the students of these and kindred works will prefer, if possible, to possess their favourite works on these subjects, and that consequently, the library circulation affords no reliable criterion of the reading of the citizens in the severer lines. It would be ungrateful to dismiss this topic without reference to the efficiency with which the library is managed. The ability, courtesy and assiduity with which the very competent librarian, Mr. Bain, and his assistants anticipate and attend to the wants of the public leave, as we are sure will be the general testimony of those who frequent the central library and its various branches, little to be desired. Of the museum, the latest addition to the attractions of the central building, we may speak in another number.

IN a communication which will be found in another column, Mr. A. Cecil Gibson regards it as a fact that the "pass" course in universities has usually the idea of inferiority associated with it, but assigns a different reason for the fact from that recently hinted at in these pages, that reason being in effect, if we understand it, that the "pass" course is intended to be an easy grade by which a student may mount up to a degree, while at the same time carrying on "the subject which is to be his life study." He is thus enabled, through the leniency of his university, to kill two birds, not exactly with the one stone, but rather with two stones flung simultaneously in different directions. Accepting for the present purpose this view, which is no doubt the fact in many cases, it seems to us to strengthen rather than otherwise the objections which are being urged by many of the friends of higher education in this Province against the policy which results in admitting to a degree a class of men who have nothing better to show for their four years, more or less, than what our correspondent calls a "smattering" of "those subjects which are considered necessary to education." Surely this cannot be good either for the institution or for the "pass" student. How much better is such an education than a sham? The argument at this point may be put in the form of a dilemma. Either the "pass" course in—let us be specific—Toronto University is a thorough university course from an educational point of view, or it is not. If it is, the student who takes it, should not suffer the injustice of being sent forth with a stigma of inferiority on his brow. If it is not, the university fails in one of its chief functions and its degree can no longer be relied on as a guarantee of a liberal culture. Touching the relative values of a general and a specific course, when other things are equal—and if other things are not equal there can be no fair comparison—we are quite unable to agree with our correspondent. It is certainly not self-evident that confining the attention to a special subject, or class of subjects, is in itself better adapted to develop either originality or genuine brain-power than an equally earnest and thorough, though necessarily less extensive study, of several of those sciences—we use the term "science" as we understand our correspondent to use it, in the widest sense—which are included in the higher years of a symmetrically arranged university course. Mr. Gibson's argument seems to us to overlook the very essential fact that in order to concentrate his powers on his chosen science and "show what brains he has," his specialist is obliged to omit altogether, or at best to content himself with a mere "smattering" of, other sciences equally necessary to a liberal education, and some of them very likely distinctly superior as a means of developing that power of original and vigorous thinking which all will agree is the true end and only reliable test of college culture. The gist of the question really is, we suppose, at what point in the university course should the divergence into specialties be permitted and to what extent, in order to secure the best educational results. Some educators are still of opinion, and are able to give cogent reasons for that opinion, that that point should be fixed very near the end of the ordinary B.A. course, if not quite beyond it. Certainly, and this be it observed is our original contention, those students who prefer to devote all their energies to an all-round, symmetrical course should not be discouraged from doing so by the dread of being branded as inferior to the specialists who are neither more industrious nor of greater ability. Such a brand, it is admitted, is affixed by the term "pass," as at present used, and for the retention of which our correspondent pleads. Did this term and its correlative denote, as they probably did at first, that the "honours" were taken in addition to, not as substitutes for, subjects of the regular course, its use would be justified. As now used it connotes a meaning which does not necessarily belong to it. Its retention is, therefore, both misleading and unjust.

THE discussion in the Ontario Assembly on Monday, touching the unauthorized expenditure on Upper Canada College, had a significance beyond the irregularity charged against the Government. This irregularity is in itself not a trifling matter, involving, as it does, the principle of the control of the House over Government expenditure. Once grant that the Government may exceed at pleasure and to any extent it may deem desirable, the amount voted for a work or institution, relying on its faithful majority to sustain it, and the discussion and voting of the estimates becomes reduced to little more than a matter of form. It must be admitted, it seems to us, that the defence made by Mr. Ross and his supporters in this case was weak and unsatisfactory. This is especially true of that part of it in which some of the Government speakers seemed to throw the blame for the over-expenditure on the Trustees of the College—an outside body not responsible to the House and without shadow of right to determine its expenditures. But apart from the political or constitutional question, the debate was significant in two respects. It revealed, in the first place, the jealousy with which the people, through their representatives, view any fresh expenditure of the public funds for purposes of higher education. Rightly or wrongly, the idea is taking possession of the public mind that the duty of the State in the matter of public education ceases at the point at which the facilities provided cease to be within the reach of all classes. The same feeling was manifested in the Assembly a few days before, when the subject of appropriations to High Schools was under consideration. The conviction is growing, year by year, that the selfish interests of those who aspire to the learned professions, on the one hand, and the philanthropy of the patrons of learning and science, on the other, can be safely relied on to furnish the best facilities for the higher culture which it is the business of colleges and universities to furnish. But in the case in question there was evidently superadded to this feeling, the old objection, which has never been satisfactorily met, that the position of Upper Canada College is unique and illogical—that it is, however excellent as a school, an anomaly in the educational system, competing with unfair advantages with the High Schools and Collegiate Institutes, and at the same time taking on somewhat of a class complexion which is alien to the genius of the people and the institutions of the Province. Neither nations nor provinces are ruled wholly by logic. Were it otherwise, Upper Canada College could have no place in our educational system.