

W.C.T.U.

Sensational Literature

That we owe a great deal to the art of printing none will deny. Since its introduction some 400 years ago, the arts and sciences, religion itself—in short, all that goes to make up what we call civilization—have advanced with strides unparalleled in the history of the world before. So evident are the benefits flowing from this art that it needs no argument to show that it has been, and is, one of the greatest agencies in the world in uplifting the human race. But, while in the main a blessing, it has not proved to be an unmixed one. Evil as well as good has resulted from its use, and it is of the evil which it does that I now wish to speak.

Of literature which may be called sensational, we may make, roughly speaking, two classes. The first class will include all literature which exerts a positively vicious and demoralizing influence on the mind of the reader. The worst of this class of literature is that which is prohibited from being circulated by the governments of civilized countries, yet they are surreptitiously printed and circulated to a considerable extent, and no doubt do great harm to the morals of the community. As, however, such literature is too vile to appeal to the tastes of any but those whose minds are already depraved, its influence is not so widespread as that of the less vicious, but more treacherous, class of literature which familiarizes us with crime and criminals in the guise of news or thrilling stories. "Vice," says the poet, "is a monster of aghastful mien, whose face is to be hated, needs but to be seen; yet seen too oft, familiar with his face, we first endure, then pity, then embrace."

How many persons read constantly the sensational accounts of crime published in many of our so-called respectable newspapers, and allow their families to read them without thinking of the injury to their moral nature resulting therefrom. As it is with our company, so with our reading; we cannot constantly associate with the vicious and immoral without suffering deterioration of our moral fibre; neither can we constantly fill our minds with details of crime through reading without having them more or less debased thereby. The old Greek hero, Ulysses, after a life spent in toils and adventures in foreign lands, exclaimed on his return home: "I am a part of all I have seen." The modern philosopher talks of the influence of environment, or surroundings, in moulding the character, and both give utterance to the well-recognized law that our minds are the resultant of the forces which have acted upon them through life. How careful, then, we should, in view of this fact, be in regard to the mental food which we take. Like that wonderful instrument, the phonograph, which records faithfully, to be given out again, every sound which falls upon its delicately attuned receiver, the human mind can give forth only what it receives; and he who through reading narratives of crime opens his mind to evil thoughts, need not wonder if he find them repeated in his conduct and inextricably woven in the web of his character when he would find, perhaps, be rid of them.

Of the dire effects of reading such literature, especially of the young, we have abundant evidence. Cases are frequent where boys scarcely in their teens have, through reading sensational stories of the "blood and thunder" style, been led to a lawless life, with the idea of becoming Indian scouts or highway robbers, in imitation of the heroes of these tales. Within the last few weeks we have read in the newspapers accounts of the trial in London, England, of the boy of 9 years of age, who murdered his mother, in imitation, it would seem, of some of the vile stories which he had read.

The other class of sensational literature to which I referred at the outset is that which, without being positively vicious, is calculated to give altogether false ideas of life and conduct. Exaggeration is usually the feature of this class of literature, and the writer depicts in an exaggerated form the faults and follies of the virtues and wonderful good fortune of his characters, the result being a highly stimulating narrative which exercises an all-controlling influence over the mind and will of the reader, and herein lies the danger of this class of literature. We all know the terrible power of alcohol, opium, nicotine and other stimulants in enslaving the will of their victim; and when we come to study the action of these drugs we find that though they at first stimulate, or rouse, to increased activity, their final effect is to stupefy, or deaden, the senses. Hence almost all stimulants are so narcotics, of which opium is the chief, and so with sensational literature. It creates an artificial life which is not satisfied by the wholesome fare afforded by the incidents and events of a common life, but craves the excitement afforded by the literature which first created it. Hence has risen in our day that class of "mental intemperates" whose condition is almost, if not quite, as pitiable as that of the victims of intoxicating drink and drugs. We find them in every community, and many of the most in every household—persons whose wills have been so weakened by this habit that they will neglect all the ordinary duties of life for the gratification of this taste for sensational reading. We recognize the novel readers in the school room by their lack of ambition and want of interest in their studies. Like a true narcotic, this stimulation of the imagination ends by deadening the sensibilities to all normal and wholesome stimulants, such as are sufficient to arouse the healthy mind of unsophisticated youth. Having accustomed to show some of the evils which have come under my observation as arising from reading sensational literature, I would suggest some preventative and remedies for this widespread disease.

As it is among the young that this habit prevails to the greatest extent, and I am addressing many who have the guardianship of these, I would say that I believe it to be the duty of parents to exercise a more rigid supervision over the reading of their children than is commonly done. In the first place admit only clean and wholesome literature to your home, in the shape of the daily or weekly newspaper. Such family papers are to be had, though their number, comparatively, is all too few, and while having this qualification, they are equal in point of general make-up, to the other class. Then, I think, parents should use discretion as to the age at which their children should be allowed to read certain classes of books. What may be instructive or amusing, or quite proper reading matter for a person of mature mind, may be quite unfit for and even dangerous for the child. We should not confound intellectual greatness with moral correct-

ness. Some of our greatest authors, owing to the age in which they lived, or to some flaw in moral character, have their works marred by moral faults, which make them unfit to be put into the hands of the young. Shakespeare and Byron may charm and thrill us by the powers of thought and expression displayed in their works, but we cannot take them so unreservedly to our hearts, nor put them so safely into the hands of the young, as we can Wordsworth, or Longfellow, or even the luckless, but, as an author, irreproachable Goldsmith. Again, the sneering, cynical style of T. A. C. C. ray, in his "Vanity Fair," when in the back the veil and exposes with ruthless hand the little intrigues and often pardonable follies and shams of society, may afford amusement without doing injury to a man or woman, but it is more than likely to do serious injury to the spirit of reverence, and respect for the conventionalities of life, if presented to the mind of a child of 15.

Finally, the best and most effective way to counteract the craving for bad literature is to cultivate a liking for that which is good—to try to study the marvels of scientific discovery, afford ample room for the indulgence of every proper taste in the mind of men, and will prove their power to satisfy and appease the thirst of the intellect and feelings if the taste for them be properly cultivated.

H. BOVIS.

Vienna W. C. T. U.

A parlor meeting of the W. C. T. U. of Vienna was held on Tuesday evening at the residence of Mrs. J. H. Teall. The gathering was a large and representative one, quite a number being present from Stratfordville and Port Burwell. An excellent programme, consisting of music, recitations, addresses and essays, was ably rendered. The chair was occupied by Rev. Mr. Shore, of Port Burwell. In his address he eulogized the W. C. T. U. and spoke of the deep interest he and Mrs. Shore took in the meetings of this society and also of the sympathy the ladies bore of their struggle against the social evil. The choir sang a number of beautiful selections, which were much appreciated by all present. Rev. Mr. Williams gave an excellent address on the "Work of the W. C. T. U." He maintained that the work of the W. C. T. U. was strictly in harmony with the work of the church; also it was needed in every community; the sphere of action of this organization was larger than that of any other temperance society, as it embraced every variety of work; and that a man was not a true temperance man merely because he abstained from the use of alcoholic liquors, if he were not temperate in all things. Mr. H. Bonis, principal of Vienna High School, gave a carefully prepared paper on "Sensational Literature." He discussed the action of this class of literature on the minds of the young to that of narcotics. First they excite and then deaden the senses. The mind, like the phonograph, reproduces only what has received from without, then how careful we should be of the kind of food with which it is stored. An excellent temperance recitation entitled "Little Blossom" was given with much effect by Miss Maud Williams, Mr. E. Witty, of the Vienna public school, gave a paper on the "Use of Narcotics." Mrs. Ball, one of the oldest temperance workers in Elgin, gave an interesting address on "The Temperance Movement in Vienna." After singing "The Maple Leaf," the meeting dispersed. The W. C. T. U. is doing an excellent work in Vienna, and great interest is taken in their meetings, especially by the young. Some time long they intend to introduce the "pledge roll" into the school, as it is one of the features of their work to implant the principles of temperance into the hearts of the children.

Notes and Incidents.

The investigations of Mr. Robert E. Lewis, college secretary of the Young Men's Christian Association, to determine whether the Christian ministry deserves to rank as the "dignified learned profession," show that in eleven representative theological seminaries, the proportion of college graduates who were declared to have been "mentally intemperate" was 65.3 per cent; and in nine leading law schools the proportion is 34.6 per cent, while in nine of the principal medical schools the proportion is 23.9 per cent.

The police in Denmark have a curious way of dealing with the drunk and incoherent found in the street. They summon a cab and place the patient inside it; then to the station, where he gets sober; then home, where he arrives sober and sad. The agents never leave him till he has recovered his self in the family bosom. Then the cabman makes his charge, and the police surgeon makes his, and the agents make their own claim for special duty, and this bill is presented to the nearest establishment where the culprit took his last overpowering glass.—The Age.

The Victorian (Australia) Drink Bill for 1894 was \$3,739,000 for a population of 1,174,000. These figures formed the text of a recently delivered lecture at Melbourne, by Mr. Justice Hodges. The learned judge stated that, putting aside from the calculation women and children, who did not consume any considerable proportion of the total, the habit of drinking was the cause of the loss of the adult males of the colony as about one in five of the population, he found that each adult male exclusive of professed Rechabites, consumed drink to the value of \$16 annually. This would give each adult male 52 gallons of beer, 23 bottles of wine, and 18 bottles of spirits per annum.

A great manufacturing company in Massachusetts recently paid their workmen on Saturday evening, 100,000 bills, each bill being marked. By the following Tuesday 40 of these marked bills were deposited in the bank by the saloonkeepers of the town. Four thousand and one hundred dollars had passed from the hands of the workmen on Saturday night and Sunday, and left them nothing to show for this great sum of money but headaches and poverty in their homes. Well might they cry out to the State, "Save us from ourselves," and their helpless wives and children, "Save us from our husbands and fathers on the Lord's Day at least."—Father McSweeney, in Catholic World.

The London Times says: "In a pastoral letter to his parishioners, the Rev. W. A. Wickham, vicar of St. Andrew's, Wigan, makes some remarkable references to the sale of drink and to a recent church bazaar at Wigan. He says that he must now make his position clear and clear his conscience. He objected to the sale of strong drink because it was likely to cause scandal. Strong drink was sold, and as a consequence, a police inspector was declared to have been lax in his duty, one police constable was reprimanded, another fined £1, and a third dismissed from the force in disgrace, events which were quite enough to make them regret that strong drink had ever been allowed on the premises."

He also objected to raffles, and tried to prevent them.

At a recent sitting of the Maori Parliament, Rev. E. Walker, of the New Zealand Temperance Alliance, addressed the chiefs and other representative natives on the drink question as it affects the Maori race. Several chiefs endorsed his statements, and subsequently a Maori exclaimed, amid the applause of the assembly, "Draw up a petition and we will all sign it." A petition was then prepared in Maori and signed by 30 chiefs, and over 90 others, met from all parts of the colony, which numbers about 20,000 natives. They prayed that the Premier and many members of the house of representatives of New Zealand would add to the contemplated licensing bill that no intoxicating drink shall be sold or be given to any of the Maori race in New Zealand, and also that no license be renewed, or any fresh license granted within a mile of Maori land, in view of the fact that the Maori people have suffered more physical deterioration, diminution in numbers, poverty and generalization from strong drink and the debaucheries it leads to than from any other cause. There were large committees of Maori women from different tribes, and districts fulfilling functions of a similar nature, and it is gratifying to note that they resolved to endorse the petition of the men by documents to a similar effect, which they drew up for themselves and signed.

SERMONS FROM THE BACKWOODS

As vinegar upon nitre, so is he that sits down to a heavy heart. Proverbs, xxiv, 20.

A clown makes a poor comforter

when the shades of the soul's windows

are down and the death ribbons hang

on the door-hell. Merriment has its

place in the world, but there are times

when it should avoid the house of

mourning, for it could not be an appropriate

welcome guest. For my own part,

I derive little help in bearing

life's lesser annoyances from the

witticisms of my chums. I never could

appreciate the wit of the man who

jokes about hitting the nail on the head

when the hammer has hit his finger

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