

nearly connected with education, we make no apology for discussing it in these columns, free as they usually are from even the mention of such topics. The story of the lives of these prisoners—at least of that portion of their lives which preceded their capture—as revealed at the trial, points a moral which needs careful study at the present day, and which will require deep and anxious pondering in the future, if the taste which now exists for luxury and materialistic enjoyment continues to increase. These men lived a life apparently to be envied; luxurious hotels and lodgings, first-class railway travelling, splendid and costly presents and purchases, with other concomitants of a darker nature, which here we can only allude to—all formed a picture which to one not in the secret was most captivating, and which to many who understand fully what lay behind seems a sufficient inducement to run the same course, to undergo the same risks, with a hope of fully attaining the desired end. It was evidently to gratify their desire for luxury—not merely for sensual enjoyment on a secure basis, so to speak, with a prospect of permanence, and with the refinement which wealth imparts, that they ventured on their tortuous career; and it is equally evident that but for their superior education and abilities they would not even have conceived their design, much less have so nearly carried it to a successful completion. It is, too, a superior education which brings many minor criminals of the same class into collision with moral and human laws; and which, in many other persons, produces evils less in magnitude and enormity indeed, but still sufficiently grave and of serious import. Had the Bidwells and their associates been gifted with less intellect and less cultivation, they would most probably have employed the capital which it appeared they possessed in a safer and honester way; and the abilities which enable clerks and cashiers to deceive their employers, to appropriate their property, and to cloak their fraudulent transactions at least for a time, would frequently be more righteously directed if of an humbler order. Even when no breach of the criminal code is committed, we are often shocked at the heights to which profanity, irreligion, and atheism will aspire when associated with wit, learning, and mental power. It is the spectacle which intellectual, unaccompanied with moral, cultivation thus frequently affords that causes many worthy, well-meaning, but misguided men to look upon education as rather a curse than a blessing, and makes them sometimes endeavour to oppose a barrier to its further progress. It is people of this class who look upon the schoolmaster with unfriendly eyes, and who see in his claims to respect and position precursors of immorality and socialism. It is needless to say that their efforts are unavailing: for good or evil the die is cast; the great power which education confers is being placed within the grasp of all, surely if slowly; and all that remains is to teach them the responsibility which is imposed by the possession of this mighty instrument, and the means of properly using it.

In this country at least, there is no question as to how this important duty is to be performed. All classes and creeds in Ireland recognize the necessity of controlling and supplementing intellectual culture by the salutary influences of religion and morality; the only point in dispute is as to the mode in which this corrective should be administered. Upon the cardinal means by which may best be combated whatever of evil is likely to be caused even indirectly through education, we must here be silent; but there is one minor argument upon which we can dilate, and to which we think the attention of our readers may be usefully directed. The craving after luxury and surreptitious indulgence which leads to the commission of crime is frequently induced by indis-

minate reading and similar influences. Sensation novels, with their over-coloured pictures of the delights which wealth can produce, *recherche* (this is an adjective quite *en regle* with our subject), wines, splendid equipages, lordly mansions, travelling, and all the usual surroundings, form a picture which cannot be otherwise than highly seductive to a youthful imagination; and in many of these novels the means by which these luxuries are procured are fraud and crime. It is true that most frequently the villain is unmasked at the end; the gold changes to stones, the wine to waters of bitterness, and condign punishment is meted to the villain of the story. But the moral shares the fate of most morals; it is generally missed or slurred over by the reader, whilst the delights of the criminal's career stands prominently forth, and are carefully dwelt upon. We at once grant that novel reading alone will not generally produce criminals; but we must consider the habits of the class who are most powerfully stimulated by it if we wish to understand its influence. Young men commencing the battle of life with strong passions, weak judgments, and ill-regulated imaginations, are exposed to many other influences which give point and force to the evils of silly and desultory reading. They taste the pleasures of independence, and they at the same time have opportunities for self-indulgence. The ordinary duties of life are thus rendered irksome; the wish for fame and eminence which is legitimate, and if properly directed, a powerful stimulus for good, is likely to act banefully; and when temptation comes, as it comes to all, the weak-minded individual falls a victim, and endeavours to take a short cut to wealth and indulgence. Hard and unremitting labour of any kind becomes disgusting; and the public house, the card table, and the singing saloon complete the work, which was commenced by the yellow-bound volumes. Even when no positive breach of law or morals is committed, the mark is left, and the injury inflicted. A moody and discontented frame of mind is produced, talents are wasted, and the victim finds when it is too late that he has thrown away his best chances, and that an obscure and probably unhappy lot must be his to the end of his days.

It may be asked, what can the teacher do in this case? Do not the evils arise when the pupil has finally left school, and when he is completely beyond its influences? This is true; but our object is to show that even in the few years which children spend in the primary schools, much may be done to guard against the future danger. It is possible to lay the foundation of a sound and healthy taste, and an honest ambition, the possession of which will be a safeguard against temptation. Above all, it is not difficult to cultivate a respect, and even a love for work, and to show why it is worthy of respect. The true nature of what seems attractive in worldly wealth and material enjoyments may be pointed out; and it can be shown in what real enjoyment and happiness consists. The honest, cultivated teacher can explain that nothing permanently worthy can be had without persistent labour and self-denial; and that real gratification can only be procured by legitimate means. He can relate examples from the great men of the present and the past, to show that renown is more frequently the result of industry than of any other single quality; that all men of genius, who have left enduring memorials behind them, were essentially hard workers and despisers of sensual enjoyments; and that those who have failed in achieving these results, have failed from lack of this quality. The youthful teacher, too, can apply the lesson to himself, for to him as to others, the failings of humanity are incident. He must learn himself, and teach his pupils, that if he wishes to secure a respected old age, if he