

After a person's taste is once formed, he will take to some special branch or branches in literature, and follow out the bent of his inclinations; but nothing is more indiscriminate than the appetite of a hungry young mind, to whom any kind of intellectual food is welcome, and which devours everything set before it.

While the eager, craving mind is thus endeavouring to feed itself, it is one of the most serious duties of parents to select it, to take from it that which must prove hurtful, and see that it is provided with what will not only satisfy a present want, but give it tone, stamina, power. Fine intellects are often irretrievably weakened or perverted for want of a little judicious guiding in their youth. "All play and no work," in reading, unnerves the youthful mind, and unfits it for any serious labor in later days, when it may bitterly regret its early indolence. Thus it is that youth should no more be allowed to feast upon fiction and poetry *alone*, than to live entirely upon sweetmeats and bon bons. They are excellent and very pleasant, given as a reward, or a relish to heartier things; but they are not to be depended upon to nourish the full powers of our growing nature.—*The Home*.

5. CAUTION IN REGARD TO PEDDLED BOOKS.

"A good book is the precious life-blood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life."—*Milton*.

"Books are men of higher stature,

And the only men that speak aloud for future times to hear."—*Mrs. Browning*.

Yes, *good* books are worthy of this high praise. But good or bad, books and newspapers are now playing a most important part in popular education,—hardly second to that of the living teacher, whether in the pulpit or in the school-room. Their character and influence must not be left out of account, unless we can be content to see our efforts as teachers paralyzed and the public taste debased, or be willing to neglect a co-operative agency of greatest power.

The subject is one of no little difficulty, and we can only throw out a few hints that may possibly prove suggestive to other minds.

Our people are fond of books. Few families are so poor that they can not point you to a parlor table or cupboard filled with them. But what are they? We will venture to say that in three-fourths of these little libraries, at least one-half of the books have been purchased of itinerant book-peddlers, or by subscription agents, and are either the *unsaleable refuse* of the cities, or compends of history, travels, third-rate novels, got up by some "enterprising house," especially for the popular market in showy covers and with abominable wood-cuts. Not a small part of these are the lives of highway-men, pirates, records of bold and wicked adventure. Every minister in the habit of visiting his people, and every school-master that has "boarded round," can verify the truth of this statement. The evil prevails most in the country, where the people feel more dependent on these strolling agents, and do not, as in the large villages, how few families, can show sterling or standard works in their collections? How few really good works, which issue month after month from the English and American press, are to be found, in comparison with works of little or no value, either to elevate the taste, inform the mind, or purify the heart? Thousands of dollars, rather, tens of thousands, are annually drained from the State by unprincipled book-sellers in the large cities, for their worthless publications. It is not too much to say that the amount thus drawn from the State for second rate, worthless, and bad books—including such papers as the *New York Ledger* and *Mercury*, which even the genius of Everett and Bayard Taylor can not make respectable, and all the insipid love-story weeklies from Boston, New York and Philadelphia; including also many of our "fashionable" monthlies and our highly seasoned "yellow covered" religious literature of all sorts and sizes, however recommended by men and Journals of whom we have a right to expect better things,* the money, we say, thus drawn from the country during the last ten years, would have supplied every town with a school library of a choice collection of standard English and American authors.

Who can estimate the value of such libraries to our youth, to the character of our young men and young women, to society generally, in promoting solid attainments, sound views on all the great questions of life, in elevating the taste of the community and furthering the efforts of our public teachers?

What are we to do? Let all teachers and friends of education by word and example, at all fit times and places, at the fire-side, at town and country associations, and through the pen, resist this enemy that is coming in upon us like a flood, instruct the people on this evil, and so create a healthful sentiment. Let all parents look to the books and papers their children and *themselves* are reading, bravely purge their tables and book-shelves, and get a little honest light and heat by a bonfire of their otherwise worthless or bad books. And

then buy only good books and take only good papers. If unable to trust your own judgment, consult not with the paid advertisements of the newspapers, but with some one upon whom you can rely. Never deal with irresponsible book-agents or pedlars.

And when you have got a good book, *read* it, and make your friends and neighbors read it. By-and-by it will not be the less valuable to you for its soiled and well-thumbed pages.—*Vermont School Journal*.

6. ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF PRIZES IN SCHOOLS.

An association of teachers in Lower Canada have been discussing the question of the utility of Prizes in Schools, and have come to the following conclusions:

I.—The advantages resulting from the distribution of prizes at public examinations are—

- (1.) To incite the children to learn;
- (2.) To recompense talent and application;
- (3.) To humble the slothful, and thus waken them from their torpor;
- (4.) To leave children permanent token of their success at school.

II.—The dangers of these distributions are—

- (1.) To over excite the ambition and self-love of some children;
- (2.) To raise jealousy and the murmurs of the parents;
- (3.) To discourage those who have not succeeded in obtaining these recompences;

(4.) To put the municipalities to too heavy an expense.

III.—But these are mere abuses, and prove nothing. They can easily be avoided, by the following means:

- (1.) To put the children on their guard against that natural and very common sentiment, pride;
- (2.) Always to be impartial in the conferring of prizes, and to consider only the assiduity, the talent, and the merit of the child;
- (3.) To give a sufficient number of prizes, so that a certain number of children may have the hope of obtaining one;
- (4.) Not to give too great a number, and thereby lessen their value in the eyes of the scholars;
- (5.) Inform the unsuccessful that they have acquired knowledge, and have the satisfaction of having done their duty;
- (6.) Not to give too costly prizes, particularly in elementary schools, making the children understand that the honor of receiving the prize is greater by far than the intrinsic value of the prize;
- (7.) The prizes to be the result of competitions taking place at stated periods during the year.

7. PRIZES IN SCHOOLS.

The Chief Superintendent of Education for Upper Canada will grant one hundred per cent. upon all sums not less than five dollars, transmitted to him by Municipalities or Boards of School Trustees, for the purchase of books or reward-cards for prizes in Grammar and Common Schools. Catalogues and Forms forwarded upon application to the Department.

VI. Papers on Practical Education, etc.

1. THE FIRST HALF HOUR OF SCHOOL IN THE MORNING

Generally decides its character for the remainder of the day. Few young teachers realise this. Vexed by fault-finding patrons, or from some other cause, they sometimes enter upon their duties in the morning with unsettled spirits and short and hasty expressions. They are more noisy themselves than usual, move about the school-room with less care, and have no smiles for earnest scholars. Before noon the school seems to them uncontrollable, and not unfrequently, under such circumstances, they feel themselves obliged to resort to those extreme measures of discipline which cause so much trouble, and sometimes break up the school. We once knew a teacher who was accustomed to ring his bell ten or fifteen minutes before school time, and encourage the students to leave off their out-door play, and go into the school room and talk about the lessons, or the other subjects of interest connected with the school. He was always at his desk, or ready to participate in any of their discussions, or answer any of their questions. Sometimes he would take with him in the morning a flower, sometimes a pebble, or a stone of curious formation, sometimes a beautiful passage from some standard work, or a simple story or anecdote from the village newspaper, always something to occupy his thoughts and divert the pupils, if they had

* See notice on page, 188.