

be regarded evermore as a mighty moral and social force. We live in an intensely active and enquiring age, and the great cry of the mighty masses of society is "Give us mental aliment." This anxiety is both natural and relevant, and is in perfect keeping with the original constitution of the human mind. It has also come to pass that no very vigorous intellectual life can now be lived without great indebtedness to books. If a man be known as a thoughtful, earnest, appreciating lover of books, and often asking their counsel, he will be held as a lover of wisdom; or at least, his interest in books will be considered as a pleasing sign of self-improving character. Full culture of the individual would seem impossible without the aid they alone can impart. A life of immense power, of thought and action is ever associated with our highest literature. Books enlarge, enlighten, improve, and empower us. The mind of the writer has laid its affluence of thought, recollection and hope at our feet. We are by sweet and silent contact brought to sympathize with loftier minds; excitement, freedom, energy are the result. Old mental limits are defied, old bondages crumble, and holding high the franchise of our individual liberty we step to higher thought and deeper intuition; and in laying aside our old self, assume a new and sprightlier manliness. Others, in offering us *their* worth reveal to us our own. Plato is mightier than Cæsar, and the pen of the thinker than embattled battalions. Thrones and coronets, palaces and pyramids, rocks and mountains, are weaker than the world's best books.

But reading is a work of Herculean labour, and the reader must come to his book with a purpose, strong, determined, and persevering if he would read with the highest result. Reading in the highest sense, is as necessarily a work of labor and solitude as is earnest thought. Deep mental life seeks seclusion, hides most purposely from vulgar gaze that alone it may struggle for a body and a development. So it is with reading; read alone we must, with pains, with patience, with oft-returning glance, for reaching full effect upon our higher being. In reading a great and good book, we come in contact with a great and benevolent mind. The book itself was not a momentary growth, a mere efflorescence, but the result of close-bent, hard-strained, oft-foiled agony and effort. If then we would fully embrace thoughts thus painful and agonistic in their birth, it is by no means a great thing that we should patiently, earnestly, anxiously seek their mastery and appropriation. Our thoughts will never rise to the height of the author's we read, unless we are prepared to toil where they toiled, to groan where they groaned, and to writhe where they agonized.

The merely desultory reader seldom benefits either himself or others. By all he thus does he impairs his faculties, and teaches his memory to become treacherous. He reads much but knows little, his little "becomes beautifully less," until he becomes an absolute stranger to earnest and concentrated thought. His mind is always too much in haste to think, or reflect, or deliberate; he merely seeks to skim the surface, and, hence, he robs himself of the ability either to satisfy or reverse the assumptions and conclusions of others. His memory becomes inert, his imagination folds its wing, his judgment droops and wilts, he feels a momentary flash, and all is gone forever.

Thus all the ends of reading are perverted; the price of knowledge, of wisdom, of endless delight is in the hands of a fool, and the poor fool has nothing to show for his pains. It is an ominous augury when a young man can sit down and devour a "New York Ledger," a sickly tale, or the "last novel," with the zest of a hungry hunter, and yet fight shy of a thoughtful and elevating book. But unhappily the rage for novels, romances, legendary tales, and plays; together with comic renderings, though by professionals and even famous readers, is too general to be considered less, even in Canada, than a great social blemish. It has become a moral blight which overspreads the land; and which blasts the blossoms of virtue withers every natural feeling and benevolent principle, every serious thought and religious purpose, and unfits the soul for everything important, dignified or divine. This "rage" has the lamentable effect of keeping the fancy awake, and the understanding asleep, of paralyzing the mind; and, after having rendered its deluded votaries totally incapable of all useful effort and painstaking practice in this life, consigns them over to irretrievable ruin in the life which is to come. There can be nothing more destructive in its nature or in its tendencies more inimical to the best interests of the public and the individual, than this general and deeply rooted passion for books of fiction, and exhibitions of a similar character.

Every determined, judicious self-improver, has faculty enough to become a good reader. His object being power, stability, force of thought, "though baffled oft," he wins the prize. Reading becomes a mighty instrument by which he throws a new complexion over his moral history, and secures to himself an ever increasing vigour of soul. Public, boundless, and unending sympathies attach to the wise and earnest reader. In no partial, circumscribed, or partizan spirit can he, without self-reproach, permit himself to live.

Books are the highest representative value of the world; and the age has gathered around us the amplest treasures of thought, and opened the proudest mines of intellectual affluence. Let our young men penetrate the surface, become familiar with the venerable and everlasting thoughts of the great Classic of our own tongue, master our mighty theological standard? and taking Isaiah and Paul by the hand scale the battlements of the loftiest truth, and touch the highest standard of the Man. We may refer to this subject again.—*Christian Guardian*.

6. EDUCATION AND ABSENCE OF CRIME IN

PETERBOROUGH.

At the recent Court of Assizes in Peterborough, the Hon. Chief Justice Draper, in his address to the Grand Jury, alluded to the fact that the present was the third time in which there was no criminal business, or none of serious import in this court. This happy circumstance might perhaps in part be attributed to the freedom from vice and impunity, from temptation which in rural districts existed to a greater degree than among the crowded population of cities. It was also to some extent owing to the extension of Education, and the tone of moral improvement which accompanies it. He would not say, however, that mere cultivation of the intellect would suffice. There must also be the knowledge and practice of the obligations of virtue and morality, and he inferred that to the influence of these in this community must be attributed the absence of crime which exists in other parts of the country.

III. Papers on Reading and its influence.

1. BOOKS AS A MEANS OF DOING GOOD.

A method of doing good which is little appreciated by most Christians, is that of promoting the circulation of religious books. Not everyone has the ability or opportunity to bring the truth personally to those who need it, but he may put into use books, tracts, and papers, which present the choicest thoughts of the most gifted minds. We are acquainted with not a few instances where much good has been accomplished in this way.

In some cases pastors keep a supply of the best practical books to loan to the young and others who could not otherwise have access to them. We know cases where the same thing is done by pastors' wives, for the young ladies of their parishes. Some persons keep supplies of envelope tracts, which they enclose with letters of business to their correspondents. In hundreds of ways, and at a very trifling expense, one who loves to do good can thus address to his fellow-men the words which, with God's blessing, may save the soul.

We have been led to these remarks by a letter from a most estimable lady in one of our seminaries, describing the value of books as an auxiliary to the religious instructions of the institution, especially in time of revival. We take the liberty of subjoining it, as suggestive of what might be done by multitudes if they would employ the like instrumentality.

March 8th., 1864.—"My Dear Sir:—Had I known that the Lord told you I had need of 'Jerry and his Friends,' I should ere this have thanked you for obeying his voice in sending it to me. But I think it is not too late, even now, to thank you; and certainly not too late to tell you how much I value it, because I can use it so well in the service of the blessed Lord. I shall take great pleasure in securing the reading of it among our young ladies, and expect thereby to get it into many Sabbath-school libraries. I am thankful to see a book of this description, that is so distinguishing in regard to conversion. It is a pearl of price to place in the hands of the young, and we of riper years are glad to sit with them while they read and ponder.

"Since I saw you, I have had great delight in using your publications for the Lord. I have kept them in my room, and every day young ladies have been to me for books, for themselves, and for friends far away. Fathers and mothers, brothers at home and in the camp, sisters at home and at school, thoughtless and inquiring friends, as well as those already Christ's, have been remembered; nor have the little ones been forgotten. I have enjoyed more than I can tell you in talking of Christ with each one who has come to me, and trying to find something that the Lord would have her or her friend read. I have blessed you many times for these books; and as often asked the Master that to the making of such books there may be 'no end,' till we find ourselves singing the new song, because we are with Him who is 'worthy to take the book,' and the book-making.

Yours,

—*Tract Journal*.