

whose citizens are ostentatious in the expenditure of wealth for purposes of outward show, there is not a public library worthy of the name, none at all of any kind to compare even with our own of 8,000 volumes. Toronto has a large University Library open to the public for reference only, but no free library of any pretensions; and all our other large cities are as badly or worse off. Even the Parliamentary Library at Ottawa, which has on its shelves 75,000 volumes, is small when compared with the Boston City Library, which circulates freely among the public 270,000 volumes. Boston possesses, moreover, in the Athenæum Library another collection of books of equal size; and in New York, Jacob Astor bestowed freely on the public a magnificent library of almost as many volumes. Our own library and the small collection of the Montreal Natural History Society, the Library of the Canadian Institute of Toronto, the Law Library of Osgoode Hall, our various College and Parliamentary libraries, are none of them accessible to the public, and are not, therefore, correctly speaking, public libraries, which it is a crying disgrace to Canada that she should be almost entirely deficient in. I was strongly impressed with the immense benefit which may accrue from such benefactions, by noticing lately the class of men who frequented the free reading room and library of the Cooper Institute of New York on a Sunday afternoon. There were in it not less than 600 men, principally mechanics and labourers, reading in hushed silence, men who, from their appearance, had they not been there, would have been, that cold winter afternoon, warming themselves in far different resorts.

Now, if we are not a reading people, we are sure not to be a literature-producing people. For writing is an art only to be acquired by a long and painstaking apprenticeship, and an art practised therefore only where there are readers to appreciate and reward it. Even when there is genius in

the writer to suggest thought, unless he possess also skill in the use of words, which shall enable him to express his thoughts clearly in language, and the art of arranging his thoughts thus expressed, so that they shall impress and not confuse the mind of his reader, his genius will be of little avail to him; and these qualifications are the product usually of long practice only. Proofs of this are many. Very able men, for instance, have always written for the leading American magazines, but till of late their articles have been crude and uninteresting as compared with similar productions in Great Britain; for, though good thinkers, these writers had not learnt that necessary art of putting just enough and no more thought into an article, of beginning it with an attractive paragraph, and rounding it off with that finish which gives it the appearance of completeness. A thoroughly well-written magazine article, from a professional pen, is worth studying for its style; but still more artistic is often an editorial from a leading English newspaper. The art displayed in introducing the subject by an appropriate metaphor or aphorism, the skill with which a multitude of facts are described in a few words, but so combined, that the mind passes without effort from the facts to the conclusion which the writer wishes to draw from them, and the unhesitating confidence with which he clinches the argument, are all qualities which practice, and not native talent alone, confers on a writer. And the same is equally true of book-making. A mere chronological stringing together of historical facts, for instance, is not writing history. The annalist is the historian's drudge. It is the part of the historian so to weave together facts, and so to identify them with persons and places as to give life and reality to the period he is describing. To do this well he must possess the power of combination which makes the dramatist, and the vivid imagination of the poet; and these faculties must be con-