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INFLUENCE OF PERNICIOUS LITERATURE UPON THE YOUTHFUL MIND OF CANADA.

In continuation of, or as a supplementary paper to, the article on "*Free Public Libraries in Upper Canada*," which was published in this *Journal* for February last, we now insert a narrative (furnished by an intelligent correspondent) of the manner in which several young lads in a flourishing town possessed themselves of a library of pernicious books. The writer gives a detail of the discovery and destruction of these books, and of the steps which were immediately taken to prevent a recurrence of the evil.

As a sequel to this narrative we also insert another communication from a clerical correspondent who attended the unfortunate young Harter, executed at the early age of nineteen years at Brockville for the foul crime of murder—a deed prompted in his case by the pernicious influence of the exciting tales and romances of a popular newspaper.

These two cases—one the natural sequence of the other—occurred at parts of the country entirely separate from each other, and at about the same time. They both suggest painful thoughts. Their occurrence goes far to justify the course which has been steadily pursued by the Educational Department, in waging war against an irresponsible mode which interested parties advocate of supplying library reading books for the young, and shows the wisdom of exercising, as has been done, a strict vigilance over this most important part of our system of public instruction.

The first narrative proceeds as follows:—

"A great deal has been already said and written on the pernicious tendency of much of our cheap literature. I refer more especially to the sensation novels of the Sylvanus Cobb school, the daring exploits and love adventures of pirates and highwaymen, and the more directly immoral writings of the Reynold's type. It is not my intention in the following article to enter into any analysis of those productions, or to speculate on the amount of mischief done by their wide-spread influence. I wish only to call the attention of teachers to the lamentable state of the case as it now stands, illustrating it with a fact which has come under my own notice.

"Books of this class are now to be purchased from booksellers who not only profess to be moral, but who court the character of being religious men; and, even worse still, many of what may be considered the less directly immoral of these books are admitted into the family circle, either through ignorance of the dangerous nature of their contents, or from a short-sighted philosophy, that the young had better read almost anything in the shape of a book, than read nothing at all,—as if this were the only, or indeed, the natural alternative; and in the case of boys, that such reading is decidedly preferable to the bar-room, the billiard-table, or other disreputable places, forgetting that these very books are often the guides and precursors to dissipation and profligacy. And this is the more to be deplored, when books of a purely moral tendency, equally entertaining, as eagerly read, when commenced, and leaving no sting behind, are now within the reach of every school boy and school girl in our highly favoured Canada. Surely the time will soon come when the influence of our School Libraries will quite cure, as it has already much modified, the morbid appetite for sensation novels, disreputable and immoral tales, based on profligacy and crime, or even those aimless, sickly, mamby-pamby love stories, which are as unlike real life as Gulliver's account of the Island of Laputa.

"This 'consummation' so 'devoutly to be wished,' requires some care and discrimination, however, on the part of those who select and serve up juvenile mental pabulum. A library for the young, to be really effective for good, must combine the amusing with the instructive; 'All work and no play,' &c., is no less true in reference to mental, than to physical occupation; and the School Board, who, in their wisdom, supply only books on science, dry history, and the philosophies, may expect the young people of the school to introduce books of another class, which, though less scientific and philosophical, are to them