

in the morning, meander among your toilet articles, in short everything you touch must be treated like a dose of medicine—"to be well shaken before taken"—for their business end, which holds the deadly sting, is ready to fly up with inconceivable rapidity at an instant's warning. The most common variety herabout are from two to three inches long—the yellowish-brown variety, which are said to be more poisonous even than the black ones of Durangy, that the Government has offered a reward (so much *per tail*) for killing. Their sting is generally fatal to a child, and varies in the severity of its effect in adults according to the state of the sufferer's blood. Some have recovered after remaining for hours in convulsions, foaming at the mouth and with stomach swelled as in dropsy. Others by prompt treatment do not suffer much. The favorite remedies are boiled elk, galicum, ammonia and brandy, taken in sufficient quantities to stupefy the patient. It is said that scorpions have the poor taste to prefer dark persons to fair ones, and that their sting is most to be apprehended at midday. The Indians eat them, after extracting the skin—a delightful a morocau, perhaps, as clams, crabs, frogs, snails, and other delicacies of civilization; but your scribe begs to be excused from rendering other hear say evidence.

FANNIE B. WARD.

THE BOOK-SHELF.

BY REV. JAMES A. R. DICKSON, D. D.

There is in the home no sight we like better to look upon than the little row of books on the shelf in the sitting-room or the kitchen. It is always a peculiarly interesting sight. It is exceedingly attractive, drawing us like a magnet, to learn what it contains. And when we stand before it, gazing reverently upon the volumes gathered together there, we are full of solemn feeling, and our mind is moved with far-reaching thoughts. These books, boardless or ill-bound, clad in old musty, brown tattered coats, looking out on us through the dimmed eyes of old titles that once gleamed with gold, saluting us with uncovered heads and graceful bow, few of them standing upright; these books bespeak the character of the home; its spiritual hungerings; its serious or humorous bent; its intellectual preferences; its dominant conceptions of life, here and hereafter. They give us the key to the moral affinities of the dwellers in the home, and they discover to us their moral aspirations. They reveal the nature of the inner life of those who prize them and preserve them. The fact that they are there, tells us that they are read; if they were not, they would not be honored with a place, nor kept with any care. These books are among the most potent agencies in the home, shedding light or gathering darkness, according to their character. For the children they are the windows through which they look out upon the great world that lies about them, which they have not yet seen, nor made acquaintance with; they are the fountains of waters at which they slake their early intellectual thirst; they are the gardens of flowers bearing some of the sweet fragrance of the world of beauty outside to their hungry senses; they are avenues of old ancestral oaks, which cast a cool shade that they may walk with delight and refreshment; they are new heavens, opening out to them larger and more glorious prospects than their narrow life offers. No marvel, then, that they often turn aside to the book-shelf to look into the enchanted ground that lies beyond the path in which they tread! No

marvel that the volumes are worn, and coverless, and bound with queer cords and thongs! They are household gods. Presences that are venerated and valued. Powers that penetrate their life with light and gird them with strength, and ennoble their existence with high considerations—"thoughts that wander through eternity." They have delighted and informed the parents, and they abide still to charm and mould the children. They are there with their counsel and encouragement and inspiration to carry on their work. And who can tell what a book may do? It is "a life," as Milton called it, that breathes its spirit into the souls of men. It freely imparts itself to every corner capable of receiving. It withholds from none save those who willingly refuse the benefit it is able to bestow. Were the history of one book written, how full of story and adventure it would be! how it would thrill with war-passages where it had to fight its way, and in which it gained the day in a noble conquest! how it would amaze us by its strange encounters and its mighty enchantments! how it would reveal to us the weird and woeful condition of the minds it dealt with! how it would charm us with its willing and patient service to every man, irrespective of creed or color, knowledge or ignorance, wealth or poverty. As William Cowper sings,

"Books are not seldom talismans and spells."

A very fine story is told to the effect that while yet a boy Abraham Lincoln read all the books in his father's house, which were not many; and he also borrowed of the neighbors every book he could hear of in the settlement within a wide circuit. If by chance he heard of a book he had not read he would go miles to get it. Among other books he borrowed of a man named Crawford, was "Weem's Life of Washington." Reading it with the greatest eagerness, he took it to bed with him in the loft of the cabin, and read on till his nubbins of tallow candle was burned out; then he placed the book between the logs of the cabin that it might be at hand as soon as it was light enough in the morning to enable him to read. But during the night a violent rain came on and he awoke to find his book wet through and through. Drying it as well as he could he went to Crawford and told him of the mishap, and as he had no money to pay for it he offered to work out the value of the injured volume. Crawford fixed the price at three days' work, and the future President of the United States pulled corn for three days and thus became owner of the fascinating book. He thought the labor well invested. He read over and over again the graphic and enthusiastic sketch of Washington's career, and no boy ever turned over the pages of Cooper's "Leather Stocking Tales" with more intense delight than Lincoln read of the exploits and adventures and virtues of this American hero. Following his plow in breaking in the prairie he pondered over the story of Washington and longed to imitate him. How he realized his longing the whole world knows. The impulse which a good book gives is a mighty formative force. It determines many things in the life. It fixes the choice of all that may enter into it, and the rejection of all that is to be excluded from it. It gives it not unfrequently a grand unity of purpose. Or, at least, it lays a foundation on which a superstructure may be erected. Dr. Benjamin Franklin tells us in his brief but intensely interesting and instructive autobiography, how he loved books and profited by them. He says: "From my earliest years I had been passionately fond of reading, and I laid out

in books all the little money I could procure. I was particularly pleased with accounts of voyages. My first acquisition was Bunyan's collection, in small separate volumes. These I afterwards sold in order to buy an historical collection by R. Burson, which consisted of small cheap volumes, amounting in all to forty or fifty. My father's little library was principally made up of books of practical and polemical theology. I read the greatest part of them. I have since often regretted, that at a time when I had so great a thirst for knowledge, more eligible books had not fallen into my hands, as it was then a point decided, that I should not be educated for the Church. There was also among my father's books, Plutarch's Lives, in which I read continually, and I still regard as advantageously employed the time I devoted to them. I found, besides, a work of DeFoe's, entitled 'An Essay on Projects,' from which, perhaps, I derived impressions that have since influenced some of the principal events of my life." That is a clear and pleasing testimony to the value of the book-shelf in the home. Let a desire of reading arise or be awakened and how it grows. Dr. Samuel Johnson informs us in his "Lives of the Poets," that Shenstone learned to read of an old dame, whom his poem of "The School-mistress," has delivered to posterity; and soon received such delight from books that he was always calling for fresh entertainment, and expected that when any of his family went to market, a new book should be brought to him, which, when it came, was in fondness carried to his bed and laid by him. George Eliot, or rather Mary Ann Evans, whose "Works," and whose "Life in her Letters" are before the world now for judgment, favorable or adverse, was from her early days a voracious reader. The first book she read was published in 1822, entitled "The Linnet's Life," which she kept all her days. It bears this inscription, "This little book is the first present I ever remember having received from my father. Let any one who thinks of me with some tenderness after I am dead take care of this book for my sake. It made me very happy when I held it in my little hands, and read it over and over again, and thought the pictures beautiful, especially the one where the linnet is feeding her young." "Esop's Fables" was a book which opened new worlds to her imagination. It totally absorbed her and gave her passionate delight. She had to laugh till the tears ran down her face in recalling her infantine enjoyment of the humor in the fable of Mercury and the Statue Seller. "The Pilgrim's Progress," also, and "Rasselas" had a large share of her affections. Having so few books at this time, she read these again and again till she knew them by heart. What a pity it was that she came under the malign influence of a bad book, "Bennet's Enquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity," which unsettled her faith, and thrust her from the ground of the true Evangelical, upon that of the doubter, if not firm disbeliever of the Christian Revelation, thereby changing the whole current of her thoughts and the character of her life. How everlastingly savoury would her books have been, had the sweet piquet of her early days been preserved! Lacking in a large measure this salt, they are like beautiful flowers that are dead, whose fragrance is corrupt as the breath of death, especially the later ones. Her own life can be felt in them and read through them. The two books, "The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven," and "The Practice of Piety," which John Bunyan's wife brought with her to his lowly home, and which her father

had left her when he died, were not a bad dowry. They had much to do with her after life. They gave her a text from which to preach many a sermon on her father's excellencies of character, his correcting of vices in his neighbors, and his strict and holy life, which had some good effects.

We are not able to estimate the power for good or evil of the little row of volumes on the book-shelf. They lead out the thoughts, and educate the mind as they will, by forming a taste in keeping with their own character. Sir Alexander Hall informed Coleridge that he was drawn to the navy, in childhood, by the pictures which "The Ancient Mariner" left on his mind. Dr. Adam Clarke tells us that he learned more of his duty to God, his neighbor and himself from "Robinson Crusoe," than from all the books, except the Bible, that were known to him in his youth. And these recollections never forsake him, and this story of DeFoe's was put into the hands of his children as soon as they were able to read. Ah! a first book has some of the sweetness of a first love! Its glory fills the soul, and it never on irely fades from it. This thought may lead us to serious reflection. Books become companions, and they demand an overgrowing fellowship in sympathy with themselves. Edward Gibbon, the historian, who speaks of his early and invincible love of reading, which he would not exchange for the treasures of India, also says: "From my early youth I aspired to the character of an historian."

How careful the parents should be of all that finds a place on the book-shelf! These presences abide, and act constantly. They should therefore be chosen books, pure in thought, beautiful in style, rich in imagination, such as may ennoble the purpose and the life. A bad book on the shelf, that ridicules religion, or speaks slightly of holy things, or contemptuously of moral distinctions or the duties of life, is more dangerous in the home than any loathsome deadly disease. The silent volume deals with the thoughts, becomes food for thought, gives rise to purposes and shapes the life. It should therefore be a good book. The story of a good man's life, or of a noble people, or of a glorious enterprise. Something that will excite and call forth the best in the nature of the child or youth. Whatever the book be, let it be good. The very choicest books are attainable everywhere to-day, for a few cents, so that there is no excuse for a lack of intellectual food in the home. Indeed, it is doubtful whether the love of reading grows with the rapidly increasing means of satisfying it. We sometimes fear that the rising generation is turning away from the culture of the mind, unless it is demanded for professional duties. We desire a book-loving people, that is, an intelligent people; and consequently we would urge parents to preserve and prize the time-honored book-shelf, for it, like the saintly Leighton, preaches for eternity.

A RECENT VISIT TO THE HOME OF MY YOUTH.

BY JOHN FRASER, MONTREAL.
No. 11.

"There is a land, a spot of earth supremely blest!
That land our country, and that spot our home."

Sacred and dear memories will over cluster and cling around the home of our youth. That home may have been humble, but it is ever dear to the wanderer. It may have been an English cottage, an obscure corner in some Highland glen, a lonely cabin in Erin's Green Isle, or some bright New England farm house. The words "Home, sweet home," strike a chord and find response, perhaps a silent one, in the hardest heart.