

after a time, the ordinary instruction in these schools, without the aid of a suitable library, does not fully meet. Having acquired in the school this taste for reading, these pupils will necessarily seek to gratify it. How important is it then, that this desire for reading should be rightly directed, or, what is better, gratified in a legitimate way in the school itself. It should be remembered, too, that teachers labour under serious disadvantages, and are less effective in their instructions where they are unable to supplement their labours by means of a library of reading and reference books. It is therefore the more necessary, both for teachers and pupils, that this indispensable adjunct to a good and successful school should not only be provided, but that it should be well kept up, with a continuous supply of the more valuable and attractive books, as they issue from the press.

The facilities afforded by the Educational Department for carrying out this important object are now most ample. An abundant supply of appropriate books has been procured to meet the winter's demand. The terms upon which they are furnished to municipal and school corporations will be found on page 176 of this *Journal*, and are worthy of the consideration of the local school authorities.

2. BOOK PRIZES BY TOWNSHIP COUNCILS.

During the last few months applications have been received at the Educational Department from various Township Councils in Upper Canada for books, to be distributed as prizes among the best Scholars in the Township. This is comparatively a new feature in our School operation, and is one worthy of the highest commendation. It has the effect of producing a spirited and healthy competition among all the Schools of a Township, of developing a knowledge acquired by determining, to a great extent, who have been the most successful teachers in the Township. We hope this Township system of Prizes will be generally adopted throughout Upper Canada.—[*Ed. Journal of Education.*]

3. READING GOOD AND BAD BOOKS.

BY HENRY WOOD HILL.

Books may be compared to men, with the exception that whilst the latter speak with the living tongue, the former give utterance to ideas in silence. "Dead men open the eyes of the living." Books as well as men make known to us our obligations, the failings common to human beings and peculiar to ourselves, the difficulties to be encountered, the duties to be performed, the distresses to be endured, and the pleasures to be realized by us. With books, as well as with men, we become accustomed to reflection, acquainted with the beauty of virtue, and the deformity of vice. Men, in their communication with each other, address themselves to those passions and affections of the mind that are conducive either to happiness or to unhappiness. Good words are the incentives to energy and industry. Should they not therefore be carefully studied? In books, as well as with men, we may confer with genius and learning.

But books have an advantage over men, in that they enable one to contemplate at leisure the finished productions of mature reflection, whilst many of us are not endowed with a memory sufficiently capable of retaining the exact words of the speaker. Moreover, a person is seldom enabled to speak at once so much to the purpose as he would write after consideration.

There is something peculiarly beautiful and soothing in the manner in which the silent processes of the mind are brought into action when we are reading, and something very gratifying in the satisfaction that we know, when reading attentively, we must of necessity derive some benefit. What can be more beneficial than improving the vigour and sensibilities of the mind, expanding the reasoning faculties, strengthening the judgment, facilitating the utterance of ideas? Are these benefits more easily attained than by a careful course of good reading?

Superior books of the present day are few, and cannot effect a degree of good at all counterbalancing the vast amount of evil resulting from the general perusal of inferior books, aggravated as that evil is a thousandfold by the prominent position they occupy, and when their sale is so much promoted by the public.

When perusing a book, we are apt to apply the ideas therein contained to ourselves, to identify ourselves with those spoken of, and more or less to allow ourselves to be actuated by the interpretation of their ideas. Our prejudices are somewhat biased by that which we have just read. Novel readers rarely, if ever, form a correct estimate of life and manners. They erroneously imagine that the ideals portrayed in the novel are taken from reality—that the conduct of persons with whom they are thrown in contact will be similar to the writer's prototype. The mock representations of nature are recognized as false when merely traversing the common walk of life.

We cannot but admit that occasionally some benefit, intellectual

or even moral, may be derived from reading a novel. Dr. Johnson declared that he never looked into a book so utterly valueless, but that something profitable might be extracted from it. The question is, is this something worth while hunting out? Dr. Johnson was a man of extraordinary capabilities, and in a most wonderful manner found time for looking into almost everything. The majority of us have not the capability of treating with time so successfully as Dr. Johnson had; and even if we had, we should use it, comparatively speaking, with but trifling advantage in reading books which contain but little knowledge. It is well, therefore, to go to the fountain-head at once—to consult those books where there is a certainty of finding knowledge, and to consider inferior books as chaff; remembering the words of Bassanio respecting Gratiano, "His reasons are as two grains of wheat, hid in two bushels of chaff: you shall seek all day ere you find them, and when you have them, they are not worth the search."

Persons who read inferior books acquire a distaste for superior books. They falsely imagine the latter to be too learned and abstruse, though the language and manner in which they are worded may be the most simple and the least complicated, and require the least degree of study to understand them. A novel appeals but slightly, if ever, to the Christian's feelings and principles. The author, as far as his novel is concerned, is too much occupied with the spirit of wordliness to think of morality. He alludes not to religion because it is distasteful to his supporters, and a hindrance to the sale of his book.

We cannot conceive anything more delightful or more promising of reward than reading books the authors of which are regarded as the masters, depositories, and guardians of true knowledge, and which are supported by the taste and judgment of educated minds. We have satisfaction in perusing them, since we are fully aware that our time is not idled away, and that we are not likely to contract a hurtful style either of thinking or of speaking. On the contrary, one of the great benefits to be derived from good authors is that of acquiring a greater facility of speaking and writing in a manner not only gratifying to others but pleasing to ourselves. We are told that Cicero, who formed his style on the model of Plato, was a resemblance scarcely less exact than that of the bust to its mould, or the waxen seal to the sculptured gem. We can hardly venture to hope that our endeavours will be so successful as Cicero's, but at the same time we may reasonably anticipate that they may be well rewarded by close intercourse with good authors. The more time one devotes to the responsibilities, the requirements, the studies of a barrister, the more likely is he to become conversant with the mysteries of the bar. Similarly with other professions. Will not the same reasoning hold good for our association with good books? The "Tatler," the "Spectator," the "Guardian," the "Rambler," the "Adventurer," the "World," have they been written for no good purpose? Do we in vain associate with Johnson, of whom Bishop Gleig has said, "that he brought more mind to every subject, and a greater variety of knowledge ready for all occasions, than almost any man?" May we not think that Johnson spoke justly when he said that "whoever would attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison?" And that he was equally just when he said of poor Goldsmith, whose simplicity, elegance, and refined feeling have no superior, that "whatever he wrote he did it better than any other man could do?" We cannot but read with advantage such novels as the "Vicar of Wakefield," of which Sir Walter Scott says, "that it is one of the most delicious morsels of fictitious composition in which the human mind was ever employed. We read it in youth and in age; we return to it again and again, and bless the memory of an author who contrives so well to reconcile us to human nature." To Sir Walter Scott can we pay a higher tribute when we say with Professor Spalding, that his novels "may safely be pronounced to be the most extraordinary productions of their class that were ever penned, and to stand, in literary value, as far above all other prose works of fiction as the novels of Fielding stand above all others in our language except these?" In our selection of books, let us remember that we are told that good books "lead us to the fountain-head of true sense and sublimity; teach us the first and infallible principles of convincing and moving eloquence; and reveal to us the mystery and delicacy of good writers."—*English Journal of Education.*

4. NOTES ON LIBRARIES AND LITERATURE.

While no library in America has yet reached 150,000 volumes, there are more than thirty in Europe, which have passed that figure. Some of these, it is true, are merely repositories of ancient and mediæval literature, with a considerable sprinkling of the books of the last century, and but few accessions from the more modern press. Such, for the most part, are the numerous libraries of Italy, while others, like the Library of the British Museum, and the Im-