

knowledge?" And then some prudent money-loving fellow chimes in with the sordid exclamation, "What a dead loss it will be if you sell them again?"

Sell them again, indeed! Does any book-lover ever think of selling his books? The dear old copies which he has treasured up from his youth—which he marked with pencil and with ink—which he has taken into the woods, when he has spent a day there—which he has read from hour to hour on the sea-shore, and then made a pillow upon the sand—sell them again! the grand old folios, the precious first editions, the black-lettered tomes, the moth-eaten octavos! Sell them again! the volumes which have soothed him when weary, which have strengthened him when faint, which have spoken softly to him in the quiet night hours; the friends for whom he has fled society and scorned wealth, and laughed at conventional distinctions. Sell them, indeed! The man might as well talk of selling his own children.

And, then, to that curt question, "Can you ever read them all?" we could reply in this manner: "Neither can we, nor would we if could." Doubtless Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton had his own reasons for recommending his son always to finish a book if he began it; but to us it does appear by no means pleasant advice. Think of wading through even the best writers in that slow and steady way? Nodding with Homer when he nods—going fast asleep with Spenser when he becomes wearied in the forest—visiting with Milton hell, heaven, and Eden, and passing from one to the other in regular progression, till we see Adam and Eve fairly out of the garden. Or think of reading Southey's "Doctor" straight through, or his "History of Brazil," or Hallam's "Literature of Europe," or the "Ancient Universal History," or Richard Baxter's works? No, no; we at once deny even the wish to perform such feats. We leave them to those mighty readers, those intellectual Brobdingnags with whom we, in our inferior sphere, have no sympathy. But then although in our library there are ten or twelve volumes which we read through and through, there are hundreds which administer to our various mental moods, a few sentences from which will suggest trains of thought, or rouse inquiry, or recall loving memories, or stimulate sweet and not illusive hopes of a blissful future. And if some volumes may retain the same position on our shelves for weeks and months together, if the dust broods over them, and a chance cobweb settles on their leaves, do not therefore imagine that they are neglected. There are some friends whom we converse with little, although we love them well. We find it pleasant at times to be in their society, although we may not speak to them; but many a loving glance is exchanged, and many a happy thought is awakened by the sense of nearness.

And now for the other question put to us by a sapient friend: "Will you be the wiser for such a strange medley; but we deny the inference. The mind in its capabilities is almost boundless. It has ample space and verge enough." With some men, indeed, it is only a lumber room, full, but not furnished; with others it is a vast warehouse, containing many precious things, but concealed in clumsy packing-cases; while with others, again, though the apartment be full even to overflowing, every thing is in its right place for ornament or for use.

Do not, then, my friend, fear being surrounded on all sides by wise and good books; fear only lest thou slight or misemploy the wealth which they contain. Remember that the savage Australians ran for centuries over gold dust, and yet reaped no harvest. We certainly believe, then, that in itself a good library is a good thing, although in some cases it may be injurious to the possessor. The danger is obvious, and may be avoided. If, by the acquisition of many books, you cease deliberately and earnestly to think for yourself; if you are tempted to roam from subject to subject, glancing at it in a superficial and desultory manner, just to know what has been said upon it, your large library will become of little value. But if, with an honest intention, you have chosen a branch of study, convinced that for you it is the most appropriate, then oftentimes books apparently quite alien may be brought to bear upon it. One author may awaken suggestions, which, though leading you for awhile beyond your own mental territory, may bring you back to it at last enriched and benefited. Another writer may give you exactly the facts you need, and a third the impulses and inducements without which your labours would be conducted feebly or not at all. One may brace you for mental conflict, another may soothe and refresh your spirit; and thus, if not wanting to yourself, all may be subservient to the end you have in view.—*The English Leisure Hour.*

7. FREE LIBRARIES AND MUSEUMS IN ENGLAND.

Mr. David Chadwick, of Salford, read a paper on this subject at the recent meeting at Birmingham of the National Association for the promotion of social science, a brief summary of which may be not uninteresting to our readers.

Mr. Chadwick commenced by stating that he had been induced to write the paper in consequence of the inquiries made by Lord Brougham, the president of the Association, on his recent visit to Manchester. The old free libraries, and those of Sunday schools and of mechanics' and other institutions, are compared with the new free reference and lending libraries recently established under Mr. Ewart's acts. Amongst other interesting statements, the following statistical returns are given:—

MECHANICS' AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS.

	No. of Members.	No. of vols. in Library.	No. of issues during last year.	No. of times the whole of the volumes have been issued last year.
Manchester Athenæum.....	924	15,000	27,512	Twice.
Manchester Mechanics' Institution.....	938	15,000	33,420	2½ times.
Salford do.....	200	2,000	2,403	1½ times.
Pendleton do.....	160	1,400	2,800	Twice.
Manchester Young Men's Christian Institution.....	609	1,720	4,635	2½ times.
Liverpool Mechanics' Institution.....	.....	16,000	18,000	Once.
Leeds do.....	1,541	10,000	46,360	4½ times.
Brighton do.....	750	3,369	1,400	41 per cent., or once in 2½ years.
Carlisle do.....	.....	4,000	12,960	3½ times.

A brief reference is then made to the mode prescribed by Mr. Ewart's acts, for taking a poll of the inhabitants for the establishment of free libraries and museums, and the amount authorized to be raised by the libraries' rate, viz., one penny in the pound on the annual value of property.

The following towns have recently established, or taken the preliminary steps to establish, free public libraries, viz.: Warrington, Salford, Manchester, Norwich, Winchester, Cambridge, Bolton, Liverpool, Sheffield, Oxford, St. Helens, Hertford, Birkenhead, Kidderminster, Lichfield, Leamington, Westminster, King's Lynn, Newcastle, Preston, and Aberdeen.

The following towns have rejected the proposition to establish free libraries, viz.: Exeter, Birmingham, Cheltenham, London (City), Islington (London), Haslingdon, Hull, and St. Mary-le-bone (London.)

Various statistical returns are then given of the number and classification of the books, the number of borrowers, and their ages and trades or business, the number of visitors to the reading rooms and museums, and the daily average of books issued, together with returns of annual expenditure.

The following tables show the number of volumes and the issues in seven of the principle new free libraries, and four of the old free libraries:—

NEW FREE PUBLIC LIBRARIES.

	Number of Volumes.	Total Issues last year.	No. of times the whole library has been circulated last year.	Average daily issues.
Liverpool.....	41,490	474,546	nearly 12	1,581 vols.
Manchester.....	32,573	156,553	" 5	521 "
Salford.....	20,438	147,300	" 7½	491 "
Bolton.....	13,097	78,670	" 5½	262 "
Sheffield.....	7,084	120,875	" 17	402 "
Oxford.....	4,520	26,000	" 6	86 "
Cambridge.....	2,579	14,628	" 6	48 "

OLD FREE LIBRARIES.

	Total No. of Volumes.	Total Issues last year.	No. of times the whole library has been circulated during the year.	Average daily issues, at 300 days per year.
British Museum, open to ticket holders from 9 to 4 in winter, and from 9 to 6 in summer.....	565,000	416,302	Not quite once.	1,389
Archbishop Marsh's Free Library, Dublin, open from 11 till 3 daily.....	18,300	7,000	About once in 2½ years.	23
Robinson's Free Library, Armagh, open from 12 to 3 in winter, and from 12 to 4 in summer.....	10,000	Not given; very few.	.....	...
Cheetham's Free Library, Manchester, open daily from 10 to 4.....	21,000	3,851	Once in 5½ years.	12

It will be seen by the above returns, that the number of issues from public libraries is generally in proportion to the opportunities