

and counters of any popular book and news store and note that week after week the piles are being replenished. To counteract this something must be done. Boys and girls who have been educated up to that point where the act of reading is not hard work, will read, suiting the subject matter to the nature of the inward craving that exists. If early teaching has not insured that the reader look with disdain upon such productions as "Roaring Bill of Rock Hollow," "The Pirates Bride" or "The Lives and Exploits of the Younger Brothers," very probably some such productions will occupy at least a portion of time. Without staying to discuss the amount of evil resulting from the dissemination of such thought, or the question as to how much of this is due to a total neglect on the part of teachers of what their pupils read, permit me to pass to a consideration of the means by which we may inculcate a taste for a better class of reading, means which to prove effectual, should be resorted to from the beginning of the child's school-life, yes even before he is able to read.

Who that has ever given any attention to the development of the child mind can have failed to notice that craving for something to satisfy their intellectual hunger, shown in their oft repeated "Read me a story." Why should we not take advantage of this appetite, and in satisfying it, take occasion to plant in the young mind the germ of that which shall in coming years develop itself into a passion for the good and great and beautiful in Literature. As a rule we find that at this stage in life nothing at all is done along this line, or else the mistake is made which results in giving us so many persons of liberal attainments, who are totally unable to appreciate anything in literature appealing to the imagination. Too many considered it useless—nay worse than useless—injurious to do anything for the cultivation of imagination. At the very period in life at which this faculty is the most promising, it is either allowed to die of starvation or sacrificed to the unnatural support of some other member of the cerebral family. Fairy tales, legends of wonderland, the beautiful myths of the old Greeks and Romans, which the student of literature afterwards finds it so necessary to understand and which confront him with the scientific name of mythology—fables, inculcating the moral and social virtues—all these are cast aside as silly, childish and unpractical, a fellow sentiment to the one which insists that the boy must know interest, square and cube root, etc., even if he does not know how to write an intelligible letter or speak correct English.

Books there are, however, where fact and fancy are so closely interwoven as to satisfy the demands of him who must see his proximately practical use for everything without the expenditure of a moment's thought. I remember distinctly my first large story-book, "The Seven Little Sisters That Live in the Round Ball That Floats in the Air," and I spent hours in thinking and dreaming over the wonderful things which I read and re-read. They were put upon the same basis as my fairy tails, and sank just as deeply into my mind. Years afterwards, when my teacher began to tell me of this wonderful earth of ours that goes spinning through space, and the different people who live upon it, my story was quickly translated, and became a series of valuable lessons in geography and ethnography. Books of this class, together with books bearing a similar relationship to natural history, will be eagerly devoured. It is wonderful how much useful information may thus be imparted and the desire for more increased.

The chief line in which corruption of taste may come in early years is that of reading cheap and villainous periodicals. This may be prevented by placing in the hands of the pupil something of a fitting and interesting nature, and then striving to create a sentiment against the worthless reading. A little persevering energy

in this direction will soon drive out the practice from our schools, or if not totally eradicated the habit will soon be put on a basis with other evils in which some pupils may clandestinely engage. There are periodicals like the "Youth's Companion," for instance, which will be seized upon with avidity by all young readers.

The storing of the mind with useful thoughts clothed in beautiful language is an adjunct to this work, which cannot be too highly rated. It should be begun early when the child memory is in its vigor. The practice is often aimlessly followed by teachers of having their pupils learn poetical quotations of any kind that tingles, without reference to the thought. The fact that verse is more easily memorised than prose seems to be enough to commend it. "It thus happens," says Bain, "that poetry above all other things may be committed to words as three-fourth words, and one-fourth meaning." Prose selections, although more slowly mastered, will as a rule be of more benefit. But the time does come when poetry may be read with advantage. As few persons accustomed to simple foods only at once relish the highly seasoned dishes of the French cook, so few pupils are at first able to appreciate the beautiful in poetry. Like the great mass of our tastes, it begins with little things and its growth is gradual. Were we to begin our high living with an attempt at highly-spiced soups or wines there might come straightway an aversion to these delectables which we might be unable to overcome in years of willing effort. So the teacher who endeavours to furnish as mental pabulum for his classes beginning an acquaintance with poetry, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Virgil's *Æneid*, or Shakespeare's Tragedies, may expect to see them turn in disgust, and wonder what manner of individual it can be who can enjoy such reading. To prevent such a disastrous state of affairs, necessity demands that the first poems selected shall be eminently interesting. Short ballads, historical poems, etc., may pave the way to something of a more formal nature. One poem that in our individual experience has proved more useful than others as an appetizer for the higher class of reading is Scott's *Lady of the Lake*. Read daily for thirty minutes to a class of twenty pupils, discussed at the time of reading, reproduced in short prose tales, and in five minute talks from members of the class, and so handled as to insure its thorough understanding and preclude the possibility of its serving simply as an occasion for a little mental dissipation, we believe it engendered an appetite for more of the same kind with fully three-fifths of that class which will leave its impress upon them through their entire lives. They become possessed with a desire to know something of the man, and his contemporaries and their writings, until they become ardent lovers of good reading, if not earnest students of English literature.

Some years ago this Association saw fit to outline a course of reading for the teachers of the state of Wisconsin, which I have reason to know has borne good fruit. I am cognizant of the fact that in at least three counties of this state the course has been and is being read by the great majority of the teachers, and county superintendents make a note of such reading on all certificates issued. Now while I recognize the philanthropy of this work of reconstructing so many teachers, would we not secure much more good if a suitable course prepared by the most experienced and able talent of the state for the pupils of our schools were placed in the hands of the teachers through the agency of the state department? The great mass of the teachers of the next generation are in the schools of to-day, and the effects of such a movement would be felt in the schools of the future. Were it not that it might seem like an attempt to close discussion of this topic, I would move that a committee be appointed by the chair to prepare a course of reading for the pupils of the public schools, report to be made to this body at the regular meeting in July.