

for such influences we shall not search far ere we find them.

Though leisure cannot be accounted necessary to the cultivation of literature, few men absorbed in the toil and business of life will be found willing to spend their spare moments in what, for a time at least, will be arduous occupation—the thorough understanding and appropriation of good books. The taste for reading has to be acquired in most cases, and the acquisition is not always easily made; and, therefore, in a population where few have enjoyed the training of a University, and there learnt to love learning for its own sake, and where nearly all have either passed from school to the drudgery of a commercial house, or the hardly less elevating influences of strictly professional study, it is not to be wondered at should there be but little inclination for any other than merely amusing reading. It is a pity that it should be so, but the education of the mass of our people must be carried beyond the elementary stage where it usually stops, before much improvement in this respect can be looked for. In this new land of ours, every man is struggling for a living; or, if that has been secured, for a competency; or, if this has been gained, for wealth. A very small class has inherited wealth and the culture which, across the Atlantic, so often accompanies it—a culture derived from generations of highly-educated well-bred ancestors. So few in fact have been born to wealth and leisure, that all may be said to be straining every nerve to acquire them. Unfortunately it usually happens that those who succeed in attaining the former have, in the process, so dwarfed their higher faculties as to have become unfit to appreciate the advantages of and rightly use the latter.

When our Society was founded in 1824, the population of the Canadas was about 574,600, and that of our large cities somewhat as follows:—Quebec, 26,000; Montreal, 22,000; Kingston, 2,849; Toronto,

under 2,000. Since then, by natural increase and by immigration, the population of Quebec and Ontario has swelled to 2,812,367. How the energies of this growing population have been expanded is apparent in some of the older hamlets having sprung up into spacious and handsomely built towns, and the older towns having assumed the proportions of influential cities in thousands and thousands of square miles of wild land cleared and converted into arable fields; in an annual exportation of \$90,610,573, instead of \$7,237,425, as in 1829, and in an annual importation of \$126,500,000, instead of \$6,169,500, as in 1829; in over 218 miles of canal dug and 3,669 miles of railway built; and in the country having risen from comparative commercial insignificance to the position of the sixth maritime nation of the world. The result and object of such activity, displayed by so comparatively small a population, is decidedly hostile to, if not incompatible with, literary culture. It has been brought about only by every man employing himself almost uninterruptedly in manual labour or commercial pursuits or purely professional services. It does not necessarily follow that these employments should exclude the cultivation of letters, for the hardest-worked farmer or artisan can find many an hour, usually spent in apathy, which, if devoted to intellectual culture, would prove the best spent hours of all the year, and the most pecuniarily profitable too; and the mercantile man has a still larger store of spare time at his command. But the fact remains that, amongst us, these classes read very little, and that the mental and physical toil to which their occupations expose them, offers a fair explanation of the fact, though not a justification of it.

In proof of the fact that we are not a reading people, the smallness and fewness of our public libraries bear humiliating testimony. In Montreal, the commercial capital of the Dominion, and a city whose corporation and