

We have heard it said publicly that the students of McGill are being beaten. In the lofty and inspiring accomplishment of taking our "whiskey straight" we have been superseded. The proud pre-eminence which for years we have maintained against all competitors has been taken from us. We have been eclipsed and our glory is departed forever. In the American universities a mightier race has arisen of which our neighbors may well be proud; a race of larger appetite, of stronger stomach and of coarser fibre, the lustre of whose achievements quite leaves us in the shade.

It is a strange competition for men who are supposed to be engaged in far higher pursuits. They are supposed to be diligently searching out ways and means by which the world will be made better and its life purer. It is, therefore, humiliating to find them engaged in eager rivalry as to who can carry on most perfectly the process of dehumanization. And if that be our object we have come far below the standard. There are noble rivals nearer home. For many a sot that reels along the street or sleeps in the gutter can show a more glorious record and can boast of more brilliant exploits, than the champion guzzler of the universities. In attaining this proficiency he has lost the name and character not only of a gentleman, but of a man. He has hopelessly and recklessly spoiled and ruined beyond all hope of recovery, a life that might have been beautiful and useful. He has brought an intolerable burden of misery on all with whom he has been in any way connected. He has become a member of the lowest rank in society, and all evil and crime and lawlessness find with him congenial companionship. These things and more are the price he has paid for his singular expertness. Still he has attained it, and we say "honor to whom honor." If it be matter for self-congratulation among men of intellect and learning that they, without a gasp, can take their "whiskey straight," then let us shake hands with this degraded wretch and be generous enough to acknowledge his superiority.

The great and noble-hearted founders of these universities would surely, if they could see the result of their efforts, repent them of their misplaced generosity. Evidently they looked on higher education as a mighty instrument for good, in moulding the nation's life and determining her destiny. They proudly dreamed of a time when a broad course of instruction would be the heritage of all, and when there would go forth yearly, from numerous universities throughout the land, bands of men whose influence would tend to diminish the enormous evils connected inseparably with an ignorant population. How startled they would be could they hear the wails of students bemoaning their inferiority, not in intellectual attainment, but in the low accomplishments of the bar-room.

If it be true that we are going behind in this matter, it is a cause not of grief, but of joy. The thoughtful and philanthropic world of to-day is massing for the consideration of the great problem of our age, namely, its drinking customs and the troubles that spring therefrom. They are looking to our universities for help. Education is a great power for good or evil, and the side with which it is allied must win the victory. If the day comes that drunkenness shall be unknown in our midst, and the students of every college of every name shall be banded on the side of sobriety, then shall the work of reform move swiftly to completion, and the great obstacle to social order and progress be removed.

#### SEA WEEDS.

Alone with the sea—  
I seem to hear  
In her moan my soul's own lay,  
Like the cry of a child  
That has lost its home  
And asks but to know the way!  
The tempest went from the ocean cave,  
And passed along the white sand;  
A gentle breeze awoke in the south,  
And hastened across the land;  
And kissed the tear from the restless wave,  
And the sigh from the sounding deep,  
And soothed with the softest lullaby  
The ocean at last to sleep.  
The stars are bright in the sky to-night,  
And the moon looks over the sea;  
But deeply impressed within my lone breast,  
Is a vision more lovely to me,  
I hear the lave of the rippling wave,  
And a whisper from every tree;  
But over my soul a music doth roll,  
That is sweeter than all to me.  
On the mountain low lie the clouds like snow,  
And a silence comes over the sea;  
But a holier calm like some heavenly balm,  
Is falling to-night upon me.  
How beautiful now is the heaven's pure brow,  
And the glory on land and sea;  
But the moonlight stream of my fancy's dream,  
Is dearer than all to me!

GOWAN LEA.

#### BOOKS AND THEIR INFLUENCE.

Not least among the advantages of a large and well stored library is that which, apart from the contents of the books, is found in the discussion of their external characteristics—the examination of their mechanical features; an occupation which never fails to induce a patient and loving spirit; as, through volume after volume, we trace the gradual progress of book-making from the days of Gutenberg down to our time. The multifarious works which have appeared on this subject may be taken as conclusive evidence of the charm which this species of labour has for some minds. Next to handling and commenting on the books themselves, is reading what others have said of them, and it has occurred to us that a mingling of heart-warm commentary with details of facts would prove neither profitless nor uninteresting.

Schiller wrote in his lofty language:—

"New shape and voice—the immaterial thought  
Takes from the invented speaking page sublime,  
The Ark which Mind has for its refuge wrought  
Its floating archive down the flood of time.

Seneca says of books:—

"They are friends, no one of whom ever denies himself to him who calls upon him; no one takes leave of his visitor till he has rendered him happier and more pleased with himself. The conversation of no one of them is dangerous; neither is the respect to be paid to him attended with expense. You may take what you will from them. What happiness, what a glorious old age awaits him who has placed himself under the protection of such friends! He will have those whom he may consult on the most important and the most trifling matters, whose advice he may daily ask concerning himself, from whom he may hear the truth without insult, praise without adulation, and to whose similitude he may conform himself.

And we read in Beaumont and Fletcher:—

"That place that does contain  
My books, the best companions, is to me  
A glorious court, where hourly I converse  
With the old sages and philosophers."

It appears that the booksellers of antiquity, in common with those of the middle ages and of the present time, were accustomed to affix their names to the works they published; from which it has often happened that in ancient manuscript the bookseller's name has been taken for that of their author. A work by Cornelius Nepos was for many years attributed to a bookseller of the time of the Emperor Theodosius, Æmilius Probus, under whose name the book had been subsequently printed.