

effected great things, so that now-a-days the widows—often widows who have never been wives—are allowed to marry again, and the second time according to their inclinations.

Then as regards your statement that there is no such thing as an unmarried woman in India. Why, Sir! there are thousands such, and the number is steadily increasing.

There is of course a crying need for women missionaries, but their work to-day is far easier than ever it has been before.

INTERESTED.

Rambles in Bookland.

II

The Evils of Desultory Study—Some considerations upon ill-directed reading.

"So man that thinks to fine and strain
Beyond its natural sphere, his brain,
In vain torments it on the rack,
And, for improving, sets it back."

Butler: Satires.

In the first number of this magazine, by the courtesy of the editor, I was permitted to expatiate on two of the phenomena which the developement of printing has evolved. One of them, the increased cheapness of good literature, I hailed as matter for universal thankfulness: the other, that strange carelessness which people are apt to evince with reference to the preservation of books, I took occasion to deplore. But these two do not by any means exhaust the trains of thought which an attentive study of the idiosyn-

crasies of the reading public will suggest. The ordinary reader, on examining the stock in trade of any bookseller, will be impressed not more by the number than by the variety of books and periodicals he will find displayed for sale, and he will be inclined to argue that this fact speaks much for the catholicity of taste which the trader has to cater to, and shows that the public not only read more than formerly but that their reading is not confined to one class of literature, such as fiction. They read biography, science manuals, history—and, indeed, books on every conceivable subject. A deduction we are entitled to draw from this is that, given the admittedly increased opportunity for the acquisition of knowledge of things in general, the reading public has not been slow to avail itself of the fact, and further that whereas not so long ago the majority of people were lamentably ignorant of subjects not immediately connected with their avocation or environment, at the present day the standard of education (which we may term "general knowledge") is immeasurably higher. The nineteenth century would stand out prominently in economic history for this fact alone, and therein the advance of the intellectual faculty in man has been materially assisted.

There is, however, one tendency, induced by the increased facility for acquiring knowledge, which I venture to think is not healthy, namely, the disposition—and a very natural one—to indulge in desultory reading and to think one knows a little of every subject. The transition from that state of mind to the