

The Educational Weekly.

TORONTO, AUGUST 27, 1885.

THE *Dominion Churchman* contains in its last issue an article headed "What Reading shall we Choose?" It complains that "the kind of literature that prevails in the comparatively small book shops, in Toronto and other towns of Ontario, is in its judgment neither the best nor the safest literature. Many of the country weekly newspapers often devote several columns to lightest fiction, romance, sensational stories of an unhealthy moral tone, thus proving what is the taste and patronage in this respect, which it believes is found to be more on the part of our youth than on the part of the advanced in years. Can we not," it proceeds, "as we ought, do something to raise the standard of choice reading? May we not strive to make reading not only amusement for the time, but also improvement of our minds, of strengthening our faith, and warming our love as children of God? We would gladly strive to promote a high, healthful standard of reading as Church people of Canada. We would gladly assist, as is done by associations, to promote the fine arts. Perhaps, in our towns and cities, the choice of books might be cultivated, e.g., by a general committee yearly adopting certain authors for reading, and by some means, encouraging their attentive perusal by those who have expressed themselves as members of such association." The aim the *Churchman* puts before it is laudable, but we fear the means it suggests for the attainment of that aim are impracticable. Had such an association as the *Churchman* recommends existed in Edinburgh in Carlyle's or Wordsworth's earlier days, certainly Jeffrey would have been a member, and certainly Carlyle and Wordsworth would have been ostracised. For how long did the "Sartor Resartus" remain unpublished, hidden away in the author's drawer till the "poor beast," as they called it, became an object of jocularly to the great seer and his talented wife? And to how many has it now become a sort of second prayer-book? Was not this sort of ostracism also the fate of Keats, of Shelley, of Galileo? And now to the first is traced the chief source of the most characteristic tendency of modern verse; the second stands first amongst English lyricists; the third is the father of modern astronomy. How many of Charles the First's courtiers read Milton or Cowley? And when the royalists lost their ascendancy what member of a puritan association but would have placed Suckling, Waller, Lovelace on the *Index Expurgatorius*? Again, who would for a moment listen to the advice of such an association? Were Zola to publish another "Nana" we all know—especi-

ally after the recent experiences of the *Pall Mall Gazette*—how it would be received by the masses.

Yet this question, What shall we read? if we look at it from another aspect, must assuredly be one which many of those who sincerely desire to read all that is best in literature find it difficult to answer. Those who from their youth up have been made conversant with all that is now called classical in the ancient and modern languages will, of course, find little or no difficulty in knowing a good book when they see it. But by those without such advantages no such critical taste is obtainable. And yet without such critical taste there is no safeguard against pernicious literature and no guarantee that healthy literature will produce beneficial results. Each of us, we fear, as far as contemporaneous literature is concerned, must be a "general committee" to himself, but, happily, as regards all other literature, there is an association whose mandates are irrevocable, and that is posterity, and beside this we know of no other rightful *arbiter legendi*—to coin a phrase. The only remedy is to encourage the study of those authors upon whose works posterity has passed its favorable judgment.

THE initial stages of a new career of prosperity and success in the public schools were marked, and to a large extent caused, by the abolition of township superintendents and the substitution of county inspectors some fourteen years ago. The influence which these gentlemen have exerted on the intelligence of the country has been in the main wise and wholesome. That the work of inspection could be more thoroughly done by men specially trained in the art of teaching, possessed of a fair amount of scholarship, and devoting their whole time to the work, than by men largely devoid of these special qualifications, and occupied most of the time with other employments, will now be universally acknowledged. It speaks well for the progress made in these years, that while at first there was some difficulty in finding men whose scholarship was sufficiently extensive and thorough to entitle them to inspectors' certificates, that difficulty is no longer experienced. For some time the opinion has begun to prevail that the standard of qualification for inspectors' certificates might very properly be raised. The influence exerted by these gentlemen in their respective counties makes it very necessary that they should be men of broad and liberal culture. The Minister of Education, in his recent address to the teachers, announces that after 1888 these certificates will be

granted only on a degree in arts with honors. The long notice given will enable all those who are now preparing for first class certificates of the highest grade, to secure the coveted prize before the higher standard is enacted. This will prevent injustice being done to any of those who have begun a course of study under the present regulations.

THE success of the annual meeting of the Ontario Teachers' Association is to a considerable extent due to the energy and courtesy of the secretary, Mr. Doan, whose labors for the comfort of the teachers and the prosperity of the association are fully appreciated by those interested. The executive ability and kindness of Dr. Purslow in the chair made those in attendance regret less the absence of the president, Dr. McLellan, than would otherwise have been the case. Teachers generally were anxious in their inquiries concerning the health of the last named gentleman.

CHANGE and uncertainty have been the predominant traits of our educational machinery and regulations for a number of years. Everything seems to have been tentative and experimental; each new departure appeared to be made, not as the natural outcome of an exact deduction from rigorous principles, but as a sort of happy guess, the success or failure of which in actual operation was to justify or condemn it. Until recently the wisdom which is born of practical experience has too often been lacking in the enactments of our educational guides. In one thing the present Minister of Education has shown more wisdom than any of his predecessors; he announced to the Provincial Association his expectation that when the new regulations, now under consideration, are brought into operation, no further changes will be necessary either in the school law or the departmental regulations for at least five years to come. Five years of peace and quiet, without the turmoil and disquiet which extensive alterations always make, would be as enjoyable and conducive to prosperity as novel and unexpected. Variety may be the spice of life, but it should be only a condiment and not a dietary article.

THE *Atlantic Monthly* for September fully maintains the high reputation which this valuable magazine has acquired with the reading public. Among the many well-known names which one meets in the list of contributors, those of W. D. Howells, M. O. U. Oliphant, and Charles Dudley Warner, will at once attract the attention of the student of current literature.