

BOYS!!! WHAT DO YOU READ!!!

During the past decade the publication of cheap books has increased enormously, yet, in spite of the grand library schemes of our day, the demand for literature of every kind has by no means become glutted. On this great American continent of ours nearly every man, woman and child not only can, but also do read. The good accomplished by the presenting of standard works to the American public at a merely nominal figure can hardly be estimated too highly; but yet the reduction of prices of heretofore expensive works has not been an unmixed good. For there have arisen firms from whose presses issue forth works which tend to do aught but edify the minds of the general reader.

It is unnecessary for me to here dilate on the extent of evil accomplished by unprincipled publishers. A casual reader of the reports of the "New York Society for the suppression of Vice," would almost begin to doubt that the good accomplished by the American press could at all counterbalance its evils. All honor to the noble men who constitute that mighty society! What a power for good they and their supporters have been in the United States in the past; and, thank God, their power is increasing.

But let us turn to that portion of the publications of the press which more especially interest the readers of this paper. Let us for a short time consider what style of works the youth of this continent chiefly read. It has been an increasingly important question, how is the flood of that form of pernicious literature which is read with such avidity by the youth of America to be checked and overcome by some form of reading which will attract the attention of, improve the taste of, and, generally speaking, increase the moral stamina of those who, when the present generation shall have passed away, will control the destinies of the two mighty nations holding sway in the North American continent.

It is not my intention, in a short article like the present, to offer a grand scheme for the revolution of the literature published for boys. I shall merely point out some of the efforts made to cope with this scourge. Let us give all the credit due to such publishers as the Harpers, who began, four or five years ago, the publication of their "Young People;" or the Scribners, whose "St. Nicholas" is so widely known. The success which both these journals have met with is most gratifying; it shows that the taste of the American youth is not itself depraved, and that there is a decided preference for good literature if it be furnished at prices to compete with those of the pernicious forms of cheap literature. I know well that the majority of my readers are acquainted with that prince of boys' papers, *i. e.* "The Boys Own Paper." The success of this paper has been simply marvellous, though it has not been before the public for quite five years; it nevertheless numbers its subscribers by the hundred thousand. This paper, three years ago, was hardly known on this side of the Atlantic; to-day thousands of boys in Canada are subscribers to it, and in the United States thousands of readers attest their appreciation of its merits.

Perhaps, as I have mentioned the "Boys Own Paper," I might, before I lay aside my pen, compare the literature offered to the youth of England with that read by the boys of America. All who have given any attention to the subject avow that England leads the Americans in this as well as in most forms of literature. Why, we have merely to compare

the British penny novel with the American half dime, to see the superiority of the former. I will mention one or two respects in which the English novelette surpasses the American half-dime series. In many of the American stories the hero is some mean little scamp who rejoices in nothing but playing tricks on all and sundry, and whose character is not redeemed by one particle of manliness. On the other hand, the British boy has always held up to him for admiration a hero distinguished by all the characteristics of true manliness. The American hero is usually, whatever position in society he may occupy, a user of slang in all its worst forms; but in the English tales a purer style is adopted, and the slang which is used is so introduced that the reader is but little tempted to add it to his own vocabulary. Again, the American boy reads of the Englishman as either a profound blockhead or a villain, while the English boy is taught by his reading to consider the American as his cousin, honorable and to be honored. From this it may be seen how much more refined is the style of English novels (boys) as compared with the same class of American literature. I shall not further dilate on this important subject, but I would request every boy who peruses this short article to consider what he should read, and to try if he cannot in some degree improve the standard of the American Boys' Literature.

EXCHANGES.

The *Dalhousie Gazette* for May is chiefly taken up with the prize lists, etc., for the last term.

The *University Monthly* for April is up to its usual interesting standard.

An historical essay on "Gregorian Music and plain Song," is the chief attraction in the *King's College Record* for April.

A writer in the *Argosy* for April discusses, and decides in the affirmative, the question, "Is government by party a necessity in Democratic countries?"

McGill University *Gazette* contains a well written article on Originality. The article is one of the best we have seen in a college paper.

The *Rouge et Noir* for May, in a well written editorial, reviews the history of College journalism, points out the difference between English and American college papers, and designates the proper sphere of such papers. It appears from this article that the English University papers are less inclined to criticize the powers that be than their American contemporaries are.

The *Astrum Alberti*, of which we have seen two numbers is an addition to the ranks of College journals. It is published in connection with Albert College, Belleville, Ont. The May number contains essays on "Hope," "The Study of Botany," and "Mohammed," which are all well written. The article called "The Age of Chivalry," certainly possesses the merit of originality of thought, for in it the writer advances the theory that the only difference between the age of chivalry and the present age is that men have transferred their admiration from a Robin Hood to a Jesse James.

The day after Hants was married he remarked: "It was youst so easy as a needle could walk out mid a camel's eye as to get der behind vord mit a voman's." — *Ec.*