

awaiting the arrival of the train, and the hod-carrier, who stops to light his pipe and read the news, before he ascends the dizzy ladder, with his load of brick and mortar. And why should they not all read? They are all men and citizens; they all have a deep interest in the welfare of the country; and nothing of human interest ought to be uninteresting to them, or unknown in fact. Ought it? They are each of them capable of mental growth and improvement, and why should they not seek to stimulate that growth, and hasten that improvement? Why not, to be sure?

Bacon said that he "had taken all knowledge for his province," and does not the common day laborer, in a vast number of things, now know more than Bacon himself? To be sure he does not know about Latin and Greek, Aristotle and Plato, and all that; and about Algebra, Chemistry and Astronomy. But he does know a more practical knowledge of the arts of life, and of the common comforts of existence that ever Bacon and his peers knew. And why should he not assume for his province all science? Let him know or learn never so much, and he will not diminish by the hundredth part of a tithe, the patrimony or right of his fellows to the same great and fertile province. Let him learn; he is an heir to it all, and has the best of all titles to it,—a mind given him by God, capable of enjoying it all, and specially endowed with an instinct to demand that knowledge. Let him read, and know, and enjoy, and be—as it is his duty to be—a better man all his days, for this reading, this learning, this knowing!

But our question will return: what do they read? So we called the young man, our friend—for everybody who sells or buys periodical literature is the friend of the *Schoolmaster*, which our favorite we means. So we recalled our friend, the seller of books, and asked him what he had to sell. "All the current magazines, all the daily newspapers—Boston, New York and Providence—and the common literature of the day. Them's what I sell," said he, with the evident air of a patron of authors and printers. "The current magazines, daily newspapers, and common literature of the day," thought we. "Those are what people read in the cars. Well, what of that?"

And what of it, dear reader? Did you ever think what that means? Let us see what it *does* mean. Here is a "*Harper*," the most widely circulated monthly in the world, we reckon—read monthly by almost a million of people, perhaps by more than that number. Look at its table of contents for any given month—this April for example—and what do you find? Many things very good, but everything—excepting a few chapters of Little Dorrit, by Dickens—a fragment, or a small article amounting to nothing. All very good for a half-hour's reading in a rail-car, but if you want any broad and liberalizing view of any science, or of any matter of permanent importance, just good for nothing. Any other magazine is quite as bad—most of them much worse. Many of them do not aim to give their readers anything but "stories"—and such stories! They tell nothing, teach nothing, mean nothing; but they do not fail to *accomplish* something. They take the time, distract the attention, defile the imagination, and deprave the taste.

Then the daily newspapers are much worse. They are made up of the current news—worse than the tea-table chat of the most prurient gossips,—filled with minute details of common court trials—of murders, divorces, adulteries, forgeries, and what not. All these accounts are made up in the greatest haste, often by very young men as reporters—though many of these reporters are men of real taste and good morals—filled with the current gossip of conjecture as to what Mr. Buchanan, or Pierce will do if he does not do another thing, and abounding in the most abusive and vituperative epithets, accusing everybody of nameless crimes and enormities, till we are compelled to doubt if there be any virtue on earth.

But then the "common literature of the day!" Our soul sickens while we are compelled—in order to discharge the duty begun in this article—to think what that term comprehends! Pirates' Narratives; Murderers' Confessions, and Exaltations; Awful Disclosures; Full Particulars; Tales of Love and Adventure; Records of Crime; The Female Horse Thief; The Counterfeiter; The Burglar; The Forger! Oh what a dire confusion of sin and iniquity! And all written with the greatest superabundance of adjectives and epithets, with the most taking sentences, and the most bewitching rhetoric. To say there is no semblance of morality in these books or pamphlets, is to say nothing at all concerning them; and to say that the "hell-broth" made by the witches in Macbeth, would be innocent in comparison with these books, is to speak far below the truth.

And yet these books sell! and sell enormously too! And what of it? We do not know, and if we did know, is there any word or combination of words, that could express the magnitude of the evils these books are setting in motion, to come down upon us like

avalanches hereafter? We wish to lift up our warning voice, and to beseech every teacher of youth, and every parent or guardian, to look well to what the young are reading.

To read nothing but these books, papers or magazines, is to waste the time, and to deprave the taste, to misinform the mind, to corrupt the heart, and to debase manners, morals, and habits. Turn away from them yourselves, warn your children and pupils against them. Ask them to read, and teach them to love the works of the old authors, Milton,—his prose as well as his poems,—Jeremy Taylor, Thomas Browne, Addison, Johnson, and the good histories, the sterling reviews and criticism, and scientific works of the times. Works these are, that will give information while they do not delude the heart, and which will tend at the same time to elevate and purify the mind, as well as to form the soul to a model of nobleness and virtue really worthy of a man.

In our day we are forming our tastes for reading on the short and hastily written editorials in our daily papers, or on the fragmentary pieces of the monthlies, or on the exciting, flashy novellettes of the hour. We must change this. Let but a young man form a correct taste for solid and substantial reading, and he is better prepared for every duty, than the one who cannot read such books.

How often do we find persons in our travels, having good minds, a keen intelligence, even much common sense, who, on account of the unfortunate habits they have early formed of reading nothing but newspapers—very good they are in their place—magazines, or tales and sketches, are nevertheless completely unable to read a book on Mental Philosophy, Rhetoric, Chemistry, Political Economy, or even on Morality and Virtue? They have never formed a taste for the plain substantial of reading and literature, and hence they can only read that which is highly spiced and exciting. A most unfortunate habit this, and it ought to be broken up at once. There is no safety, and no promise of improvement to the one who will not make a resolute effort to accomplish this work for himself. But we will resume this topic at another time.—*Rhode Island School Master.*

SCIENCE.

Notes on the Natural History of the Mountain of Montreal.

1. *The Ruffed Grouse (Tetrao Umbellus) breeds upon the mountain.*—While taking a walk a few days since, I was somewhat surprised to hear distinctly the drumming of a grouse in the wood on the back part of the mountain, overlooking the Cemetery. I only heard the closing notes, but, being quite familiar with the sounds, was well satisfied that they proceeded from a bird of this species. Turning soon afterwards to cross towards the city, I had ample confirmation of my suspicions. Another grouse had been started on that side by two young men who were climbing up the hill. The bird alighted within a few yards of the spot where I was standing, but again took wing immediately upon seeing me. It remained, however, long enough for me to observe that it was a fine large male. It was certainly a different bird from the former, and accordingly there were on that day, at least, two males on the mountain; and further, as it is quite probable that they have their consorts, no doubt, they will breed there, if not killed by some of the sportsmen who frequent that locality.

Mentioning the above circumstances afterwards to a friend, he informed me that he believed grouse were always to be found on the mountain. If so, it is a remarkable fact. The habits of this species are not those of an open country bird. The little patch of wood which covers the hill actually extends into the suburbs of the city, and it is not isolated from the main body of the forest by many miles in width of cultivated land, but it is also traversed every day in all directions by scores of enthusiastic young Nimrods, who fire at everything that happens to be clothed with feathers, no matter how small. It is wonderful that so conspicuous a bird as a ruffed grouse could remain there a single week without being killed, and yet, there is reason to believe, that the species has maintained its ground in this spot since the days when the red men were masters of the island.

2. *A rare English Butterfly, common.*—Near McTavish's Monument I started a very beautiful butterfly, but after much tantalizing effort had the melancholy satisfaction of seeing it soar away out of sight. Not being an entomologist, it is quite probable that I did not adopt the proper method to ensure success. Ascending to the brow of the mountain, I saw another evidently of the same species. This also escaped. Within half an hour two others were met with, the latter of which was secured after several ineffectual attempts. It turns out to be "the Camberwell Beauty," a species whose