

READ FEWER BOOKS.

BY BERMUDA BLOUNT.

ONE who has to do with the education of young people, and who is at all familiar with the current literature of the day, must be interested in the results of to-day's education as compared with that of the past. Whether every boy and girl, if turned loose in a miscellaneous library, would, like "Bridget of Elia," browse only upon the best and avoid all the poison, is a question. An intelligent guardian would probably dislike to trust them. The realistic tendency of modern fiction is demoralizing and tends to deaden that immortal part of us, the imagination. Writers of this school, Tolstoi, Daudet, Zola, Dostoeffsky, and even Henry James and Mr. Howells are working immense harm to the literature of the age, and are setting in motion a wave of influence that can have only disastrous results. It is the poetry, the romance, the illusion, if you will, that have kept human life sweet and true through all the ages. They have given us glimpses of heaven which cold realism only laughs at in scorn. One brave defender of the grand old masters of literature, who deserves the thanks of all thinking people, is Maurice Thompson. With his keen and fearless pen he has pierced the false fabric woven by realists through and through, so that all who will may see its emptiness. But even aside from the character of modern books, there are too many of them, and people, young and old, read too much.

Hamerton's "Intellectual Life" should be put into the hands of every young person, and his theory in regard to reading should be practised. The gifted men and women of to-day, who are prominent in all positions of life, read a far less number of books

than do their sons and daughters. Look back over the history of the past. Did Shakespeare have many books to read? Did Spenser, Chaucer, Homer, Plutarch read a hundred novels every year? Take the signers of the Declaration of Independence in our own country. What were they in a literary way? Men who were fed mentally upon the Bible, Pilgrim's Progress, and Josephus. Men descended from a hardy Christian race, whose one book for study and recreation had contained the Divine Revelation and the Psalms of David. Men who learned the Shorter Catechism, most of them, when they were all but babies. And could there be a set of men collected the wide world over, of finer dignity, of nobler sense, of truer heart? One of our best statesmen said recently in a lecture, that when he was a boy there were but three books in the house, and he learned them all by heart. They were the Bible, a hymn-book, and McGuffey's Sixth Reader. But it was a liberal education for him. Mental dissipation is one of the crying evils of the day. The newspapers are too large, cheap novels are too plenty, and young people are urged to read by older persons who have no discrimination and do not know that a page well digested is worth twenty books read for mere amusement. Boys and girls, with fresh unspoiled minds need no recreation mentally. They should be laying up treasures for future use. They should be forming bone and sinew for the wear and tear of more mature years. And if, even by harsh measures, they can be induced to build well, how grateful they will be when each one can say, "My mynde to me a kingdom is."—*Common School Education.*