

## LECTURE.

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GENTLEMEN,—An English classical poet hails the approach of the season upon which we are entering, and of which your usual series of public exercises gives us due notice, in an apostrophe as truthful as it is beautiful:

“O Winter, ruler of the inverted year,  
Thy scattered hair with sleet like ashes fill’d,  
Thy breath congeal’d upon thy lips, thy cheeks  
Fring’d with a beard made white with other snows  
Than those of age, thy forehead wrapp’d in clouds,  
A leafless branch thy sceptre, and thy throne  
A sliding car, indebted to no wheels,  
But urg’d by storms along its slippery way,—  
I love thee, all unlovely as thou seemest,  
And dreaded as thou art.”

Is not the benevolence large that can love anything like this? Does not this friend of darkness restrict the journey of the great orb of day, and plunge us diurnally into gloom before our work is half done? The writer replies in vindication:

“————— but kindly still  
Compensating his loss with added hours  
Of social converse and instructive ease,  
And gathering, at short notice, in one group  
The family dispers’d, and fixing thought,  
Not less dispersed by daylight and its cares.”

For seven winters has the Mercantile Library Association done its utmost to realize in some good measure the conception of our poet. You have sought to improve these “added hours of social converse,” by gathering, from time to time, into “one group” the more general family, in order to “fix the thought, dispersed by daylight and its cares.” Having addressed you once or twice annually since your organization as a Society, it has been my privilege to