

# BOOKS AND NOTIONS

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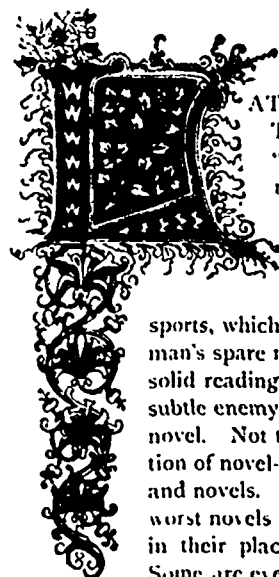
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ATE numbers of the Montreal Star and Toronto Globe bring up the question: "Do our young men and young women read as much or as wisely as those of the former generation?" and both agree that the taste for good reading is rapidly decaying. The Star attributes the falling

off to an over enthusiasm of athletic sports, which occupy the greater part of the young man's spare moments and leave him tired and unfit for solid reading. The Globe says: "A more potent and subtle enemy of high intelligence is the all-abounding novel. Not that we join in any wholesale condemnation of novel-reading. Far from it. There are novels and novels. It is vastly better to read any but the very worst novels than to read nothing. Many novels are, in their place, good for mental rest and recreation. Some are even profitable for instruction and culture.

But the confirmed novel-reader is given over to a mental dissipation which enfeebles the intellect, enervates the will, and takes away all possibility of high intelligence or brain-power. It is, we think, Rev. Washington Gladden who lays down the excellent rule that for every hour given to the novel there should be at least another hour given to some standard work in literature or philosophy."

Another element which we believe to be still more potent in the gradual decline of the steady reading habit is the vast volume of books, papers, periodicals, pamphlets, etc., which are within the reach of everyone. Too much to read through, almost too much to glance through, the public look at the pictures, praise the appearance and rely upon the reviewer for a knowledge of the contents. It would seem invidious to select out of this mass one book to read, and as for re-reading or studying a book, that is out of the question.

The bookseller knows well the degeneracy of the public taste. Gradually, year by year, classics are less sought after. The light novel, which possesses so little real worth that it dies and is never heard of one month after its first issue, that is the book which sells; something new; with a taking title and a fancy cover and a good show bill. The standard novels may now be had at a price which is within the reach of the poorest, and yet how few people you meet who have read them. We reprint with pleasure the following remarks on this subject from the Globe:

The young man or woman who has no taste for good reading, who cannot enjoy an hour with a classic or scientific master, or with a first-class magazine article, is to be pitied. But let no young man content himself with saying that he finds such reading intolerably dry, that he has no taste for it. The taste is surely worth cultivating,

and for anyone who has brains, it is easily cultivated. He has but to commence and continue a course of good reading. He will like the second book better than the first. Distaste will soon yield to pleasure, and pleasure to delight. The school teacher of the day could render no better service to the coming generation than by discarding one-half of the rubbishy text books, which are now the bane of school children's lives, and devote the time to teaching them to read, inwardly digest and presently enjoy good literature. Such a course of training in the schools would put the next generation far ahead of the present in intelligence, culture and morality.

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Alas! the poor bookseller! Everybody has a right to rob him. Not that his trade is such a profitable one that the whole public should envy his wealth; but in some way the impression has got abroad that the bookseller is "fair game."

The public decide that a Free Library, Mechanics' Institute, or Reading Room would be the cheapest way to get the benefit of the bookseller's wares, and they tax him for his share. He may think that he will be able to make up for this loss by having the trade of the library. Poor misguided man. The librarian is the only one who has any right to make money out of the library. The bookseller is notified that he may tender for the privilege of supplying what is required, but at the same time he is notified that he will have to compete against the wholesale dealer, the publisher and every other member of the trade, and to get the job he must practically cut off all his profits.

Now the managers of the public libraries wish to go a step further. They want to buy their supplies in England and the United States. They don't want to leave any of their Canadian money in Canada, so they send down a deputation to interview the Government, asking that their importation be placed upon the free list, and one of the deputation has the audacity to state that the booksellers do not object to a certain portion of their demand. Who gave this gentleman authority to speak for the booksellers. He takes too much upon himself. The booksellers do not want their trade discriminated against. We protest against any such course, and so should every publisher who has any of the instincts of fair play.

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A letter in another column from Mr. Robinson, of Belleville, deserves a careful perusal, not because he has arrived at altogether correct conclusions, but for the reason that he has very evidently studied his subject, which is one of great interest to the trade. We still hold to our opinion that the new schedule of rates for daily papers is a great gain to the newsdealers, and propose to go into the subject in detail in our next number. Of course each district has its own system of dealing, and it is possible that there are towns in which the business is done principally upon the yearly basis. In such cases certainly the new rates are not advantageous, but it is our impression that in the majority of Canadian towns the news trade is done on the weekly, monthly and quarterly basis.