

nitudes, because, if it did, the whole sky would be a blaze of starlight. If telescopes with powers far exceeding our present ones were made, they would no doubt show new stars of the twentieth and twenty-first, etc., magnitudes. But it is highly probable that the number of such successive orders of stars would not increase in the same ratio as is observed in the eighth, ninth, and tenth magnitudes, for example. The enormous labour of estimating the number of stars of such classes will long prevent the accumulation of statistics on this question; but this much is certain, that in special regions of the sky, which have been searchingly examined by various telescopes of successively increasing apertures, the number of new stars found is by no means in proportion to the increased instrumental power. If this is found to be true elsewhere, the conclusion may be that, after all, the stellar system can be experimentally shown to be of finite extent and to contain only a finite number of stars. In the whole sky an eye of average power will see about 6,000 stars, as I have just said. With a telescope this number is greatly increased, and the most powerful telescopes of modern times will show more than 60,000,000 stars. Of this number, not one out of one hundred has ever been catalogued at all. . . . In all, 314,926 stars, from the first to the nine and a-half magnitudes, are contained in the northern sky; or about 600,000 in both hemispheres. All of these can be seen with three-inch object-glass.—*Professor E. S. Holden, in the August Century.*

FOR THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.

### REGRET.

BY R. W. ARNOT.

Oh! give me back the years  
I squandered, reckless, following illusion  
With pleasure's phantom forms whose fruit is but  
confusion,  
And a vain regret that sears  
The memory like some acid deep inhibiting  
The purest silver, and recording lines inditing  
In black relief appears.

So stood I on the brink  
Of life, on either hand delicious dreams unshattered,  
And strown before me choicest gifts were scattered,  
With many a golden link  
Joined to desires that, surging in my brain,  
False prophet promised pleasure without pain  
And bade me drink.

And deep the cup I drained  
Of wine from out Gomorrah's grapes expressed,  
While thirst unquenched the bitter truth confessed,  
The loss I gained;  
The "Blood" may cleanse but naught can e'er efface  
Sin's burning footsteps, or in man replace  
A soul unstained.

### THE POPULAR IDEA OF A READING BOOK.

This indifference to the higher functions of literature, this disposition to regard the reading book as mainly a means for promoting an acquaintance with the forms of written speech,—whence is its origin? Why is it that with the whole realm of English literature open to the text-book maker, there should have been, until recently, almost an entire disregard of it, especially in the construction of those grades of reading books which are co-extensive with the school life of the vast majority of American children? I think the answer will be found in the power of this great institution of common schools to compel those who serve it to partake of its spirit, to be strongly affected by the very character of the life which they are seeking to shape. To see the bearings of this, we must take into view the whole mass of literature for the young.

The period of fifty years last past has witnessed an increasing volume of this literature, and also the growth of a sentiment in favour of it. The disposition to separate the reading of the young from the reading of the mature is of very modern development, and it has resulted in the creation of a distinct order of books, magazines, and papers. Not only has there been great industry in authorship, but great industry also in editorial work. The classics of literature have been drawn upon not so much through selection as through adaptation. Great works, whose greatness lay much in their perfection of form, have been diminished and brought low for the use of the young. The accumulation of this great body of reading matter—we can scarcely call it literature—has been largely in consequence of the immense addition to the reading population, caused by the extension of the common school system. When the children of a nation are taken at the age of five or six, and kept eight or ten years at school, and this schooling becomes the great feature of their life, dominating their activity and determining the character of their thought, it is natural that books and reading should be largely accessory, and that the quality of the audience should largely affect the kind of speech which is addressed to it. In a general way this great horde of young readers in America has created a large number of special writers for the young, and both readers and writers have been governed by the American life which they lead.

Now the text-books in reading which have prevailed in our schools have come under this influence,—an influence pervasive and unstudied rather than acute and determined. The quantitative, and not the qualitative, test has been regarded. By no preconcerted signal, but in obedience to the law of their social and literary life, the makers of reading books began to disregard English standards, and to fill these books with the common-place of their own writing and that of those about them. They lost their sense of literature as a fine art, and looked upon it only as an exercise in elocution and the vehicle for knowledge, or, at the highest, for ethics and patriotic sentiment. They lost also their ap-

prehension of the power of great literature in its wholes, and made their books collections of fragments. There are two facts which signally characterize the condition of the popular mind under this regime; first, that literature is relegated to the higher grades as something to be studied; and, secondly, that the newspaper is advocated as a reading book in schools. So remote has literature come to be in the popular conception. This state of things may have been inevitable; it is none the less deplorable.—*Horace E. Scudder, in August Atlantic.*

### A SERMON BY FATHER TAYLOR.

I once heard Father Taylor preach a sermon on the Atonement. It was all in a style that nobody but a sailor could understand, a style that every sailor could comprehend, although a treatise on this subject from an up-town pulpit would have been "Greek" to him. This was one of the passages: "You are dead in trespasses and sins, and buried too, down in the lower hold amongst the ballast, and you can't get out, for there is a ton of sin on the main hatch. You shin up the stanchions and try to get it open, but you can't. You rig a purchase. You get your handspikes, capstan bars, and watch tackles, but they are no good. You can't start it. Then you begin to sing out for help. You hail all the saints you think are on deck, but they can't help you. At last you hail Jesus Christ. He comes straight along. All he wanted was to be asked. He just claps his shoulder to that ton of sin. It rolls off; and then He says, 'Shipmates, come out!' Well, if you don't come out, it is all your own fault."

It was on the Sunday before a State election. Briggs was the candidate of the Whig party, but Father Taylor desired that he should be elected because he was a religious man. This was his prayer: "O Lord, give us good men to rule over us, just men, temperance men, Christian men, men who fear Thee, who obey Thy commandments, men who—But, O Lord, what's the use of veering and hauling and pointing all round the compass? Give us George N. Briggs for governor!" His prayer was answered on the next day.

Father Taylor was eloquent, humorous, and pathetic by turns. Sometimes all these characteristics seemed to be merged in one. These and many others of his traits interested me, but I loved him because, first and last and all the time, he was the sailor's friend.—*John Codman, in the August Century.*

### A TERRIBLE TROPICAL SNAKE.

There are eight varieties of him (the fer-de-lance), the most common being the gray speckled with black, precisely the colour that enables the monster to hide himself among the roots of the trees by simply coiling about them and concealing his triangular head. Sometimes he is a beautiful flower yellow; then he may never be distinguished from the bunch of bright bananas, among which he hangs coiled; or he may be a dark yellow, or a yellowish-brown, or the colour of wine lees speckled with pink and black, or a perfect ash tint, or black with a yellow belly, or black with a rose belly—all hues of tropical mould, of old bark, of putrefying trees, of forest detritus. The iris of the eye is orange, with red flashes; at night it glows like incandescent charcoal.

And the fer-de-lance reigns absolute king over the mountains and the ravines; he is lord of the forests and solitudes by day, and by night he extends his dominion over the public roads, the familiar paths, the parks, the pleasure resorts. People must remain at home after dark unless they dwell in the city itself; if you happen to be out visiting after sunset, only a mile from town, your friends will caution you anxiously not to follow the boulevard as you go back, and to keep as closely as possible to the very centre of the path. Even in the brightest noon you cannot venture to enter the woods unescorted; you cannot trust your eyes to detect danger; at any moment a seeming branch, a knot of lianas, a pink or gray root, a clump of pendent yellow fruit, may suddenly take life, writhe, swell, stretch, spring, strike. Then you will need aid indeed, and most quickly; for within the space of a few heart-beats the stricken flesh chills, tumefies, softens, changes colour, spots violaceously, and an icy coldness crawls through all the blood. If the physician or the *passeur* arrives in time, and no artery or vein has been directly pierced, there is hope; but the danger is not passed when life has been saved. Necrosis of the tissues begins; the flesh corrupts, tatters, tumbles from the bone; and the colours of its putrefaction are frightful mockeries of the hues of vegetable death, of forest decomposition, the ghastly pinks and grays and yellows of rotting trunks and roots melting back into the thick fetid clay that gave them birth. You moulder as the trees moulder; you crumble and dissolve as dissolves the substance of the balatas and the palms and the acornats; the Death-of-the-Woods has seized upon you!

And this pestilence that walketh in darkness, this destruction that wasteth at noonday, may not be exorcised. Each female produces viviparously from forty to sixty young at a birth. The haunts of the creature are in many cases inaccessible, inexorable; its multiplication is prodigious; it is only the surplus of the swarming that overpours in the cane fields, and makes its high roads perilous after sunset, yet to destroy 300 or 400 thanatophidia on a single small plantation during the lapse of twelve months has not been uncommon. The introduction of the mangouste (the ichneumon) may, it is hoped, do much toward protecting the workers in the cane fields and on the cocoa and coffee plantations; but the mangouste's powers are limited, and the ocean of death is illimitable.—*Lafcadio Hearn, in Harper's Magazine for August.*

THE prevalence of neological and sceptical opinions among the French clergy of the Protestant Church has been greatly exaggerated. Of the 1,200 or more ministers of the various Protestant bodies not more than 200 can be said to hold objectionable views.

## British and Foreign.

THE Rev. J. D. Powell, of Belfast, vice-president of the Irish Wesleyan Conference, is dead.

THE eightieth anniversary of the birthday of Sir Peter Coats was celebrated at Auchindrane lately; the display of fireworks was visible at Ayr.

TWO stands of colours, one of the 26th Cameronians and the other of the old Scots brigade, have been added to the collection in St. Giles's Church.

AT the Plymouth celebration of the tercentenary of the Armada, representatives were present of the families of Drake, Frobiher and Hawkins.

A SCOTCH paper put it this way: Lord Lorne, undeterred by past failures, is about to publish another volume of verse under the title of "A Love Idyll."

DR. F. F. ELLINWOOD, of New York, preached the annual sermon in behalf of the Kennett Bible and missionary society in Clackmannan Parish Church lately.

THE Rev. George Milne Rae, M.A., secretary of the mission at Madras, left Bombay on 21st ult. for Scotland, and expects to return at the beginning of October.

DURING the sittings at Manchester of the United Free Methodist Conference, burglars rifled the secretary's box and carried off the contents of the missionary boxes.

THE number of visitors to the Glasgow Exhibition has reached over 2,000,000. It took thirty days to complete the first million and thirty-three to complete the second.

DR. BRUCE LOW, reporting on the prevalence of diphtheria at Enfield, shows that the disease is spread by the habit of the surviving members of a family kissing their dead.

THE Rev. Daniel Jones has resigned the pastorate of the Fabias Baptist Chapel, Liverpool, in order to join the British Society for the propagation of the Gospel among the Jews.

A TABLET is about to be placed on the front wall of the house in Lothian Street, Edinburgh, in which Charles Darwin lodged when he was a student in the Scottish capital.

THE students at present pursuing theological courses among the Protestants in France exceed 200. Besides these, there are a number studying in Germany, Switzerland and Scotland.

DR. SOMERVILLE, of Glasgow, who is at present sojourning at Moffat, preached there on a recent Sunday to an overflowing congregation with his accustomed eloquence and spiritual energy.

AN Australian journal, in a memoir of Rev. Robert Dey, of Marrickville, New South Wales, asserts that his native county of Aberdeen produces one-fourth of all the ministers of all denominations in Scotland.

DR. THAIN DAVIDSON has gone for some weeks rest to Barmouth in North Wales. His Church in Islington is to be closed for a few Sundays for painting and repairs, the congregation meeting meanwhile in the Agricultural Hall.

DR. G. F. PENTECOST, who has arrived in London with his wife and several members of his family, after a period of rest and travel will commence evangelistic work in the autumn in Dublin where Mr. Stebbins will probably join him.

LORD BREADALBANE, having found amongst some old manuscripts a volume of the records of New Kirk Session, Edinburgh, for the year 1704, has handed it to the Convener of the Assembly Committee on the records of the Church.

THERE is a proposal on foot to nominate Sir George Bruce for the Moderatorship of the next English Presbyterian Synod. He has been an active elder for many years and has rendered important service to the Church at large.

THE *Ardrossan Herald* recalls the fact that Rev. John M'Neill preached in the Free Church there, while its pulpit was vacant and adds that, though favoured by many, his unconventional form of expression was considered by others too coarse for Ardrossan.

THE Bengal Mission of the Free Church mourns the loss of one of her most effective agents in the person of Rev. Boiconto Nath De, in charge of the Mahanad district for the last four or five years, and for the preceding twenty years superintendent of the Culna Mission.

A STAINED-GLASS window has been placed in the transept of the new parish church of Moffat in memory of Rev. Alexander Johnston by his grandson, Mr. William Tod, of Heathery Haugh. Mr. Johnston was minister of Moffat from 1800 to 1851, where he died in his eightieth year.

AT the last of the present course of services conducted in Newsome's circus, Edinburgh, by Rev. John M'Neill upwards of a thousand people were unable to procure admission. Mr. McNeill goes to Strathpeffer for a holiday and will resume the circus services when he returns at the end of September.

LORD POLWARTH presided at the great missionary meeting in the Free Assembly Hall, at which Dr. Pierson, of Philadelphia, expressed his belief that there had been no convention held on any part of the earth's surface to compare in regard to character and possible results with the recent conference in London.

DR. PARKER, says that to Scotland he confidently looks for the beginning of a movement that will secure a readjustment of the whole question of creeds. "Scotland is reputed to be the stronghold of orthodoxy, and therefore is qualified to take the initiative in this sacred and most useful revolution. No heretic can do it."

THE Rev. William Mearns, D.D., has been presented with an address from the Kirk Session and parishioners of Kinross on attaining his ministerial jubilee. Ordained in 1838 at Glenrines, he was translated five years later to Kinross, the charge of which he continued to hold till the end of 1886, when he resigned.