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BOOKS FOR YOUTH AND CHILDREN.

We extract the following from the *North British Review* for August last. The subject treated is an important one; and at this particular time, in connection with the public libraries established in almost every County in Upper Canada, it is one of especial interest. The extracts which we give contain the philosophy of the reasons which induced the Council of Public Instruction to concur in placing on the official catalogue so many books relating to "practical life," in its lighter as well as its soberer phases,—its duties, amenities and responsibilities. The article will amply repay a perusal, coming as it does from a proverbially cautious source. Its happy illustrations and eloquent defence of, and plea for, the youthful tastes and instincts of youth will enlist the sympathies of every intelligent reader. The Reviewer proceeds:—

Dr. Johnson used to say, that a boy at school is the happiest of human beings. If he had added that youth is not only the happiest period of life, but also the best, in the highest sense of the word, perhaps there would not be given so general a consent as to the maxim which he has enunciated. Graceful, engaging, interesting, every one would allow it to be. The dewy freshness of the morning, the soft fragrance of spring, the tender beauty of a budding flower are the images that naturally belong to that stage of existence. The gradual change, mournful as it is to witness, the fading bloom of gentle unsuspecting innocence, the cold numbness stealing over the generous instincts, instead of awakening vain and querulous repinings, may

serve rather to impress that life is moving on to its full development. All that is fair must fade, in order that it may be renewed in richer loveliness. While it lasts let it be admired for its intrinsic qualities, as it deserves.

Persons advanced, or advancing in life, and particularly those whose occupations involve them in the exciting pursuit of power or riches, are apt to look down upon youth as an unprofitable time,—as a mere preliminary to real life, to be despatched with all convenient speed, and then to be forgotten. They are not aware how much they have need to learn from it, and to sympathize with it. It is very good for all to dwell much in the presence of the young. The greatest and best of men have loved to do so. The strange and unanswerable questions which children are continually asking, inadequate utterances of unutterable thoughts, convict the proudest intellect of its ignorance. Their trustful and affectionate confidence in others rebukes the suspicious caution of experienced manhood. The unstudied grace of every "breeze-like notion," the gladness of the "self-born carol," their free and full enjoyment of everything beautiful and glorious around them, these, and such like traits, are angelic rather than human; they speak of innocence, and happiness, and love; they say to anxious hearts, "Take no thought for the morrow,"—"Be not troubled about many things." Nor is boyhood an ineloquent teacher. Its generous ardor, its dauntless activity, its chivalrous sense of honor, its fond attachments, its hopefulness and truthfulness, its clear, bright eye, fair cheek, light and joyous frame,—but strangely unlike is all this to the wrinkled brow and heavy tread, and callousness and deliberate selfishness by which it is too often succeeded. Much, very much is to be learned from the young.

It is to be regretted, that the recollections of childhood and youth in most persons so soon grow dim and perish. In one sense, indeed, childhood is never forgotten. Love or ambition may usurp for a time a tyrannic sway over the heart, and seem to blot out all the time before; but the thought of the home of other days never fails to act like magic on the heart, the faces and haunts familiar to the child remain enshrined in the memory of the man, and command for ever an affectionate reverence.

But, if it were possible, how strangely interesting would be a voyage of discovery into those happy regions,—that "sunny land of childhood" through which we have travelled,—if memory could distinctly recall the first dawns of intelligence, unravel the tangled web of thought and feeling which has puzzled Locke and Descartes, and analyse the complex substance of the human mind into its primordial elements; or even if Biography were more careful to trace out the records of the first fifteen years of a human life.

Some of the peculiar traits of boyhood are often overlooked by those who cater for the instruction and amusement of that strangely interesting class. Hence some of the besetting dangers of some books for children. Education, in one form or other, should be the great question