

likely to make use of them, are unable to come up to college in the daytime and spend hours reading in the library. If they could take them out and read them at home, much instruction and benefit would be derived, which is certainly not the case at present. No one appreciates more than we do the intrinsic value of the gift which Mr. Mackay so generously bestowed upon the University, but the value of that gift would be so much enhanced if more facilities were given to readers that we venture to express the hope that the learned and generous donor may be prevailed upon to allow the present restrictions to be removed, since they prevent this valuable acquisition from becoming even more valuable in becoming more accessible. We do not wish to appear ungrateful or unappreciative, but we are sure that no one will recognize the justice of our proposal more fully than Mr. Mackay himself when his attention is properly drawn to the matter.

We have received an anonymous communication upon a subject of considerable interest, from some one who signs himself "One who knows." We feel bound, on account of the grave nature of the accusations contained in this letter, to enforce our rule with regard to anonymous communications, but if the writer will send us his name, we shall most willingly insert his letter in our next issue.

Contributions.

BOOKS AND THEIR INFLUENCE.

(Continued.)

We are not prepared to pronounce a sweeping condemnation of novels, but we must freely confess that in our opinion a large proportion of our modern novels had better be burnt. Of moral influences, or of useful information, they have about as much as the foam of a glass of beer has of substantial nutriment. Such reading unfits the mind for successful work, ruins the memory, destroys aptitude for study, fills the mind with romantic and silly ideas of life, and so unsettles people that they are incapable of that steady application which brings comfort and independence to those who are content to work and wait. They are nothing if not sensational. They deal in slang, and are coarse, even when they are not actually vicious. They create a false belief that wealth and fame are easily and quickly won, even by those who have neither education, natural fitness, nor persistent application. They destroy the natural and healthful appetite for useful reading and study, and even the best of them fritter away time, which, if spent in reading useful matter, would suffice to thoroughly educate the reader in his chosen occupation.

Sir John Lubbock made a capital point against books that would be better burnt, in an address to the medical students of King's College Hospital. Such malarious volumes, which the banker-entomologist did not hesitate to term deadly poison, contained, said Sir John, "The *bacteria* of mental disease, as certain in their operations as any of the infusions of the physiologist!" The warning was most timely and lends force to any statements as to the insidious working of pernicious literature. It is to be hoped that thoughtless devourers of garbage in disguise may take alarm at the dangerous *bacteria* the learned member for the London University held up in *terrorem*. Nor need this be any deprivation. For there would still remain worthy "survivors of the fittest," "books, dear books," that Sir John Lubbock would be the first to admit:—

"Have been, and are, comforts, morn and night,
Adversity, prosperity, at home,
Abroad, health, sickness—good or ill report,
The same firm friends; the same refreshment rich,
And source of consolation."

Let us here say a few words about libraries; let it be clearly understood that a public library can never become anything much better than a literary scrap cupboard, if it is to depend

upon chance donations. If no mind presides over its formation, if no money is placed regularly at the disposal of a committee for the direct purpose of buying books upon a well-considered system, the thing formed is not a library, but a bookstall, in which all the chance collected volumes are to be read, instead of bought, by droppers-in.

We may illustrate this by a reference to the Free Library at Manchester, which may be regarded as a library with sense and light in it, not a dead lump of volumes; but its efficiency is mainly the result of a judicious use of money in the purchase of those books that were of the most sterling character; those that secured a fair supply of right material in each kind of study, or that were in other ways peculiarly suited to the exigencies of the city. We may be sure that in Manchester there is a taste for works on the steam engine, and upon chemistry, which must be met by books of a class that would be little sought in other towns. A public library, as everybody knows, consists of a reference department, containing books that are not to go out of doors, and a lending library. In the Manchester library, to which I am referring, in one year 60,000 volumes for reference were consulted, and 30,000 volumes were borrowed. The reference library is used by all classes, the lending library also, but chiefly by working men and women, 2,000 active borrowers of books.

There is a solidity of taste about this mass of readers to which a report bears curious testimony. Let us note a fact or two concerning it. What now is the kind of reading favoured by these people? These earnest people, who mean work with their heads as well as their hands, use books that are taken from the library by them in the proportion following: In literature, including poetry and fiction, essays, &c., each book is read on an average 15 times a year. Works on theology, philosophy, &c., are next in request; in that class each work was read, on an average, nine times. In history and biography every work had an average of eight readers. The scientific works have had seven readers each, and each work on law, politics or commerce may, in the same way, be said to have been borrowed twice.

There is a fine earnestness about this. Even in Manchester, imagination refuses to be crushed. The most popular novel was Scott's "Kenilworth," which had 34 readers in six months. The pleasure book most read was "The Arabian Nights." These weary mill hands spent their evenings with Haroun Al Raschid. The next best read books appear to have been *Ivanhoe* and *Robinson Crusoe*.

The historical works most favoured were those most dealing in adventure and excitement. Histories of Napoleon and Lives of Wellington and Nelson, were respectively about half as much in request as Gulliver's Travels. Narratives of the Battle of Waterloo were next in popularity. There is one man who has read Alison's History straight through, and a volume entitled "Shipwrecks and Disasters at Sea," was read 25 times in six months. Almost equal in popularity was Gordon Cumming's "Adventures in South Africa." Less in request, but much demanded, next, in fact, in the order of popularity, were Macaulay's "History of England," and Layard's "Nineveh." Let us here interject the very noticeable fact, that out of more than 77,000 volumes issued during the year, only three were lost. A striking proof of the trustworthiness of the English workman.

Life in a library is not altogether without its funny side. One had need serve for a time to complete one's education, and learn some weak points of human nature. Recently, an omnivorous reader, one who wants "something to read," asked for Darwin's "Origin of Species," or "Descent of Man," and being unable to obtain either of those works, contented himself with "Gulliver's Travels."

Another of the same genus, enquired for Gibbon's "Decline and Fall," and after examination, finding it perhaps too heavy a job, thought he would take "Walton's Angler." Still another, who thought Thackeray's "Newcomes" a very stupid book, expressed himself rapturously over Bret Harte's "Luck of Roaring Camp." These are the people who want "something light" to read during the hot weather. At a popular library a gentleman lately got a copy of the latest novel of an eminent