

The system, in truth, attempts too much and accomplishes too little. Experts who have made a study of mankind inform us that the physical well-being of a community largely depends upon the kind of food they eat. The Irish, as a nation, occupy a low place in the scale by reason of so many of them being almost exclusively potato-eaters. This conclusion is not affected by the fact that many individual Irishmen live differently, and attain the highest results.

Similarly, the mental well-being of a community may be fairly gauged by the kind of literature which forms its daily diet. How do we stand in this regard? Is it not a fact that the vast majority of us read nothing but newspapers? Every bookseller will tell you so. "Oh, but you forget our Mechanic Institutes and Lending Libraries." Not by any means. The evidence afforded by these useful institutions only serves to further illustrate my point, for it establishes that the only books which are really in demand amongst the educated classes are novels and general light literature.

There is no use in shirking facts, even if they be disagreeable. Most of us are potato-eaters pure and simple, and nearly all the rest of us are, at most, only vegetarians.

The best proof of the narrowness of our market even for works of fiction, is that when we do produce a Gilbert Parker—an out-and-out Canadian too—he is compelled to become an exile in order to make a living.

The general distaste for anything more substantial than newspapers and fiction must, in large measure, be caused, directly or indirectly, by our system of education. Which of us has not, as a child, indulged in a surfeit of something or other, and thereby acquired a life-long dislike for that particular article of food? Is it not possible that school children, under our system, instead of acquiring a taste for knowledge only get a surfeit? It is all very well to content ourselves with believing that we are doing our utmost for the cause of education, and that we are spending more than most communities do upon it.

The truth is we are spending far too much, and are obtaining a very poor return for our money.

The intention is good, the mode of carrying it out utterly wrong.

Under our system we have a dozen different kinds of educational institutions, while one or two would be sufficient. All the requirements of free and compulsory education could be attained in the Public Schools alone.

Look at the list of institutions which our present system maintains as given above.

Is it any wonder that a country so deluged as this should have a lasting aversion to water?

We are carrying too much sail for the size of our craft, our bow is almost submerged, so that instead of leading in the race we are hopelessly behind, and stand a much better chance of being swamped.

If our present system is costly, which nobody can doubt, and if it fails to produce adequate results, which is equally apparent, why not let us try a less ambitious scheme.

By restricting our efforts to Public Schools only, and by making the course of study more interesting and less pretentious, we would impart a much more thorough education, and would stay the annual expenditure of millions of dollars which heretofore have been worse than wasted. There would then be some scope for individual effort, and our really first-class colleges, which are now languishing for want of funds, would receive a fair measure of support from those who, by their own means or by means of scholarships, would be encouraged to attend them.

A. C. GALT.

A Strauss Concert in Vienna.

THE visitor to Vienna who neglects attending a Strauss Concert, must lay to heart the sad conviction that his experience of that city is deplorably incomplete. For "Strauss" and "Vienna" are two words, which are inseparable to a vast number of people in the civilized portion of this globe, and the name of the river, which sweeps past this city, is seldom named without there being an inclination on the part of someone who hears it, to hum or whistle the first few bars of "The Beautiful Blue Danube," sweetest and most immortal of waltzes.

It is many years since its dreamy strains first echoed through a ball-room; the gilded youth who first kept time to

it were gloriously fashionable in tightly-strapped down trousers, high stocks, and watch-fobs, and they danced with young ladies, who were chiefly remarkable for very much crinoline and side-curls of wonderful stiffness. Many a night has come and gone since those dancers danced their last, and Strauss, who was then the centre of the gay life of Vienna, has now so many rivals in the field of catering for public amusement that his influence is now but the shadow of what it once was. Yet still the old waltz holds its own, and will do so as long as there are light, young hearts in the world to throb responsively to its suggestive sweetness, and still the name of Strauss is among the best beloved of all the Viennese public holds dear.

And so the announcement that Johann Strauss was to conduct a portion of a concert for the benefit of his brother Edward was enough to pack the Musik Vereins Saal to its fullest capacity. It may be stated *en passant* that Johann is the favourite. A report, which gains popular credence here, accuses Edward of paying some obscure composer for the music which appears under his name. Being an excellent conductor, a thorough musician, and, above all, bearing the magic name of Strauss, much is forgiven him—if there be anything to forgive—but he naturally fails to obtain anything like the public affection which falls to the share of his celebrated brother.

The Musik Vereins Saal is what Mr. Swiveller would describe as a "hall of dazzling light," at least that is the impression as one comes from the winter dreariness into an interior all aglow with much gilding and red plush, and starry with incandescent lights. Street dresses are the rule among the ladies, but a fair sprinkling of delicately tinted blouses and light dresses aid the smart uniforms worn by the numerous officers, in producing an effect of much colour and brilliancy. Conversation in many different languages, with its incessant accompaniment of laughter, fills the air with a merry buzzing, and a crisp holiday humour pervades the whole place and effects everybody, save the venerable but truculent ushers, who, clad in decent black, with the addition of a scarlet ribbon looped around the left shoulder, magisterially conduct each one to his or her seat, and remonstrate harshly with those who, either by accident or design, have got into the wrong places. A faint refined odour of coffee prevails—in Vienna, a coffee is always the most refined of essences—and it comes from a railed-in space in front of the buffet, where groups of merry folk sit around the marble topped tables, drinking the delicious beverage and eating the dainty pink and brown nüss and chocolate Törtchen. It is altogether perhaps as merry, bright, and innocent a scene of pleasure as great Vanity Fair has to show.

Johann Strauss' wife—his fourth, 'tis said—radiant in a purple and crimson hat and a gray silk gown all sparkling with cut steel, sits in a side box beaming with "nods, becks, and wreathed smiles" as one friend after another comes up to speak to her. She is small, plump, and dark, rather Jewish in appearance, a contrast to Fraulein Strauss who sits beside her. She is a large fair girl in buff and white, who might be mistaken for an English girl. They are easy enough to recognize, for there is not an art shop in the town that does not display an engraving entitled "An evening with Johann Strauss," in which the numerous members of that celebrated family are seen grouped effectively in a magnificent drawing-room, in the centre of which the composer himself sits at a grand piano, while his wife leans gracefully over the back of the chair. Seeing the picture after seeing the originals is to gain a revelation of the skillfulness of flattery, and one is inclined to exclaim, like the spiteful lady in "Punch" upon beholding her dearest friend's portrait, "How beautiful, and yet, how like!"

The trampling of many feet and the appearance of an imposing number of black-coated forms on the platform cause a sudden cessation of the conversation, and then a burst of applause greets the entrance of Edward Strauss, who mounts rapidly into his place, and stands for fully two minutes bowing his acknowledgements to a most enthusiastic reception. He is, however, a man of business, and the echoes of enthusiasm have hardly died away before his small, much-be-diamonded hand is swinging the baton, and the low rippling prelude to Thomas' delicious "Mignon," exquisitely played by the harpist—the only lady in the orchestra—fills the expectant silence.

The feelings aroused by a miscellaneous concert of instrumental music are difficult to describe, especially when