

It is true we may not be able to reach many of our criminals by education, even were Schoolmasters to be appointed among them, (owing to the fact that they are generally beyond the age for that purpose,) but we may, by means of the Chaplain, the Prison Schoolmaster, and a well selected Library of instructive and appropriate Books, open the door for the return to rectitude, and honour, of many of the younger criminals whose moral perceptions are not yet blunted by continuous contact with vice, and whose lives are not yet hardened by crime. Such an influence might give a new bias to their feelings and tastes, and inspire with a purer and nobler ambition some of those who are now only noted in the annals of crime.

The continuous reacting influence of books is well known. It is perpetual, boundless and incalculable. Baxter wrote, and his pungent truths fell upon the mind of Doddridge, and awakened it to the service of God and mankind. Under this impulse Doddridge wrote his work, and it converted the soul and kindled the heart of Wilberforce. Wilberforce again wrote his View; and that was the means of Leigh Richmond's conversion. His Dairyman's Daughter has been the means of converting hundreds. In giving a book we may be lighting a train that may kindle other fires, which shall spread their influence until their blended light shall mingle with the splendors of the millennial morn.

This subject is worthy of the attention of County Councils, on which have been conferred by the Legislature ample power to establish such Public School and Prison Libraries, as they may judge expedient.*

From many places in which Public School Libraries have been established by the Department the most gratifying assurances have been received of their beneficial effect. As a sample, we may quote the following testimony from the City of Hamilton, the Local Superintendent of which, in a recent comprehensive and interesting Report to the Board of Trustees of that City, remarks:—

(1) The Library, an important feature of our School System, was established in the month of October, 1855, but was not opened for distribution until towards the close of that year. Its advantages are now very generally appreciated, and its influence for good felt throughout the entire City. There is no class in the community to whom a Library can be made more directly beneficial than to the Pupils attending our Schools. Their attention is so exclusively confined to their Text-Books and to their peculiar School Studies, that one of the greatest deficiencies observable among the Scholars of the higher classes in our School is the want of that ready and practical information which can be obtained only by an intelligent course of general reading. As the use of the Library is freely extended to all, and, as the selection of Books is frequently made with much judgment and discretion, it may be fairly hoped that they will promote a general acquaintance with Literature and Science, and, at the same time, improve the pupil's taste and enlarge his range of thought.

(2) The Library has been productive of much good in another way. Our Country has been deluged with every description of trash, in the shape of paper-covered novels and "Light Literature." These are sold in the Book-stores, vended around the street, and almost forced upon the purchaser in Steamboats and Railroad cars. . . . There can be no question that their effect is demoralizing to the last degree, and every philanthropist will hail with joy the development of a healthier tone of public reading. Now it may be reasonably expected that these Libraries, spread as they are over all the Country, and consisting of Books at once instructive and entertaining, will materially tend to improve the public taste and cultivate a desire for reading of a more elevating description. It is believed that such a result may be observed already, to some extent,

*The selection of Books made by the Department of Education under the designation of "Practice Life," is especially appropriate for Prison Libraries, consisting of Moral Tales and Stories.