

saloon; and if Mechanics' Institutes could surround their literary attractions with the brightness, warmth, and comfort of the whiskey saloon, add to the reading-room a conversation-room, supply the members at a moderate cost with refreshments, especially tea and coffee, and allow the same freedom of intercourse and opportunities of innocent occupations and enjoyments which give to the tavern some of its attractions, the industrial classes would have less reason and less inducement to frequent the tavern, and in the new habits and higher tastes formed, the home would change its gloom, and dirt, and wretchedness for the comfort and elegance demanded by improved tastes.

The popular entertainment has its place and its value in the organization of Mechanics' Institutes. It may be made the agent of high and refining enjoyment, and may lay the foundation of a taste for music, the arts, or literature. But there is no branch of the Institute duties that requires more care, vigilance, oversight, and caution to give the high moral effect to the public entertainment. The programme of the entertainment should be examined by the managers, and the character of the performers. Everything opposed to good taste, good manners, purity of sentiment, and elevation of mind—everything low in tone, leaning towards sensuality or unhealthy sensationalism, or calculated to bring the pure, the good, and the beautiful into ridicule, ought to be expunged. It is too true that low entertainments marked by sensationalism and gross buffoonery are popular, and fill the hall and the treasury of the Institute. But the right estimate of its mission and its destiny regards it as the ally of the Church and the School—an agent for the moral and intellectual advancement of men, and therefore diverted from its great purpose, and desecrated to vile uses, when used for entertainments that vitiate and corrupt their audiences. It is one object of these entertainments, as well as of the popular lecture, to elevate the intellectual tastes of the members; and although the low entertainment may, while public taste is low, pay the best, a persistent effort to refuse the low and encourage the high would in time cultivate a purer taste, and amply repay the Institute for its temporary sacrifice.

It has been suggested in these remarks

that Government aid should be granted more liberally in support of the Institutes. It is, however, not proposed, nor at all contemplated, that the nation should do all, and the classes for whom the Institute is to supply great advantages nothing. For all benefits given the members ought to pay as high a fee as their means will allow. But besides this, the wealthier classes have a direct interest in sustaining the mechanic's interest. Employers have an interest in getting skilled, educated, and honest employees, and not only have the Institutes a claim upon their finances, but it is the interest and the duty of all employers to urge upon their servants, whatever position they may hold, the importance of becoming members. There are employers blind to their own interests, who believe all they are required to do is to pay the wages of their employees, and often they suffer, and beyond calculation they lose, from the ignorance they encourage or the indifference they create. There are also employers who regard studious and reading habits with doubt or with antagonism. They believe that the love of reading, or that mental pursuits are inimical to business habits. But it is almost inevitable to young men, that if they have no intellectual resources and enjoyments, they will have recourse to gratifications of a doubtful, if not of an assured vicious character. Few employers meet with honest and skilful servants, whose only study and delight are to attend to the routine of daily work. All need relaxation and change of occupation. It is only extreme dullness that requires no change in the daily life, and if employees, after the labours of the day, have no mental resources, the probability is that their leisure hours will be spent in the saloon or in worse scenes, and that the employer who thinks it possible to make the whole mind of his servant slave to his interests and wishes, will sometimes have to suffer from fraud and dishonour, because he expected dullness to be honest than intelligence.

The Mechanics' Institute is as much a fact and necessity of civilization as the Public School or the University. It is demanded on the very conditions of industrial life. It is established to complete the work of the Public School—to fill the same position to the industrial classes of every kind as the Club and the Literary Society fill in the lives