

of his earlier days, when he was actually working as a mason, but when his mind was also at work upon higher objects than those on which his hands were engaged—when he had learnt to appreciate the maxims and philosophy of Bacon, and to return from his day's work to his lodging to enjoy the intellectual feasts which works of that kind presented to him. He says that on one occasion he was tempted, in his intercourse with his fellow-countrymen, to transgress the bounds of temperance and to indulge with them in excessive drinking. He returned to his lodging and opened his *Bacon*; his intellect was clouded; and he was unable to appreciate and enjoy it, and from that day he made a resolve—a resolve which I believe he uniformly maintained afterwards—never again to cloud by intemperance that intellect which God had given him; because he felt that, in doing so, he was depriving himself of the inestimable pleasures and enjoyments provided for him by a gracious and merciful Providence.

A JUDICIOUS SELECTION OF BOOKS NECESSARY—NEWSPAPERS—WORKS OF FICTION.

Among the attractions of these places there are requisites which are essential to its success. I think the most important is a useful and judicious selection of books, for the perusal of those who are invited to frequent them. Now, I don't mean, by a useful and judicious selection of books, that we should very carefully weed our village or our town libraries of everything which the fastidious might think ought not to be there. It is by no means necessary that this should be the mode of dealing with libraries. Let there be books of all kinds in these libraries, but let the selection be a wise and judicious selection, with a view to put in those libraries books which, while they attract—and there are many of this character—will also deeply interest, and will excite men to higher motives of action, and will supply them with examples to guide them in their course, in whatever sphere of life they may be placed. (Loud cheers.) In regard to newspapers, I think myself that, looking to the character of the English newspapers of the present day—looking at the variety of information which they contain—looking at the ability with which they are written, in their descriptions of facts occurring in all parts of the world, looking at the reviews of literary works which we find in them, even if newspapers were the only literary food presented in these reading rooms, I would still advocate the reading room being open, even if confined to newspapers, which it is evidently not desirable it should be; and I would encourage newspapers of a good class, containing, as many of our newspapers now do—even including many of those which are published at the cheap rate of a penny—the latest information and events occurring in Europe, in London, and other distant places on the evening before. These cheap papers are conducted with great ability, and even they would be an admirable substitute for the debasing pleasures—if pleasures they can be called—which are afforded by the tavern and the public house. (Loud applause.) But again, let me just for a moment advert to works of fiction. First of all, let me make the observation, that I think it most unfair to authors of works of fiction to class them altogether as a whole, and to draw a broad line of distinction between works of fiction and those works which are not works of fiction. Some works of fiction contain admirable morals; some works of fiction contain instruction of the highest character, and in a form in which perhaps no other works can convey it; and I think it would be most injurious to the interests of those connected with libraries if works of this kind were excluded. I should therefore tender my humble advice to this association, not to think of excluding all works of fiction, because they would thus exclude what are deeply interesting to the great body of readers, and which will also be calculated to convey to them the highest moral instruction. Let me just advert to one book as an example, because it is not written by a countryman of our own, I mean *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. (Applause.) Who here, however much he may object to some works of fiction, will say that *Uncle Tom's Cabin*—a work of fiction—ought to be altogether withdrawn from the perusal of the working classes, there being many of them who have no opportunity of seeing works of this kind except through these reading rooms? (Loud applause.) The wise rule will be to look to the character of the work from its intrinsic merit, rather than to draw any arbitrary rule, which, I am sure—speaking my own opinion—would be most injurious to the interests of those for whose benefit libraries are intended, and would tend very much to defeat the object which those have in view who are zealous in the promotion of those institutions. (Loud applause.)

VALUE OF WORKS OF BIOGRAPHY—MISS MARSH AND HUGH MILLER'S WORKS.

Passing by the newspaper and those literary works, the class of which I think ought to find a place in those reading rooms, I see there is a subject of great congratulation presented to-day—that we have a number of books published, from time to time, which are not

ephemeral, which are not works of fiction, but which possess as deep an interest as can be possessed by any works of fiction, while they are calculated in the highest degree to elevate the minds of those who read them. Let me just refer to some of those which have been published within the last year. Take the *Life of George Stephenson*. (Loud cheers.) Who is there that can read that *Life of George Stephenson*—looking at his early struggles for knowledge, unaided by any of those advantages which Mechanics' Institutes in the present day afford to men similarly circumstanced, laboring to make the best use of that intellect which God had implanted in him—laboring with a success which made him one of the first men in Europe—without feeling the deepest interest in the narrative, and without feeling himself a better man for the attentive perusal of that work? (Applause.) George Stephenson was a self-educated man,—for, while he labored against all disadvantages successfully in cultivating that intellect with which God had endowed him, he did not overlook the immense advantages which the means of high education afford, but he gave his son—the present distinguished man who bears his name, and who also is one of the first men for engineering talent in Europe—gave him the very best education which it was in his power to command, showing how much he appreciated those advantages which these institutions set before the mechanic, and how much he valued those means which are now placed within the reach of all for the improvement of their minds, and for obtaining that knowledge which is conducive to the highest ends. Well, then, let us turn from the life of George Stephenson to the life of a man who moved in a totally different sphere. Who is there that has read any of those short and very interesting memoirs that have lately been published of that great and lamented soldier, General Havelock, (applause); who does not feel the deepest interest, and feel that there is the highest instruction to be obtained in the perusal of the life of such a man as that, moving altogether in a different sphere, and setting an example which some of us, from our different circumstances, may think we might not be able to follow, but still acting from a motive which must and ought to influence all—the highest motive which ought to regulate the conduct of men? Then, again, who is there that has read the narrative of the heroic defence of the beleaguered city of Lucknow by the garrison, out off as they were from all intercourse with their fellow-countrymen, that does not admire the spirit which animated them, and feel himself incited to the highest deeds by reading the matter-of-fact commemoration of their daily trials and their daily exertions? (Loud applause.) I will mention another book which has only been published very recently, since the last meeting of the association, and which will not, therefore, be generally known; viz., *English Hearts and English Hands*, written by an English lady, and recording in the most simple terms her experience among a class of men whose rough exterior and demeanor repels most men—I mean the men employed in making railways—and showing that beneath that rough exterior there is a soil well worthy of cultivation—a generous and noble feeling only requiring to be called out by kindly intercourse with one who has most nobly devoted herself to their welfare. (Loud applause.) This book speaks of Englishmen in a way that is of thrilling interest, and conveys this important lesson, "Go thou and do likewise." (Loud applause.) We may not all be able to do what she did, but let every one be animated by the same excellent feeling towards our fellow-creatures as she was, and then there will not be wanting the means by which they may benefit those around them, whatever their sphere of influence may be. As I have mentioned the name of Hugh Miller, let me also refer to one of the works of that eminent man—a work not recently published, it is true, but which we are able to place in these libraries, to read ourselves, and afford others the means of reading—I refer to *My Schools and Schoolmasters*, which gives the early autobiography of that eminent man. That book is one which I read with the greatest interest, and with feelings of humiliation to think that with all the advantages one had possessed, one fell so far short of what he attained—unaided as he was by those advantages which others more favorably circumstanced have enjoyed. (Loud applause.) I have ventured to allude to those books rather as types of a class of books which, if placed in these libraries, I think cannot fail—in connexion, let it be, with works of another kind, with newspapers and the best works of fiction—to attract and interest. People will not read because they are told to read, and because they are told a book is a good book; but if they find a book full of deep interest, full of narrative and facts, and all the more interesting because they are facts; that is the way in which, I am sure, we will get those reading-rooms frequented. They should attract people to them, and thereby carry on a successful competition against the tavern, the alehouse, and the bear shop. (Loud applause.) In connexion with these reading-rooms I certainly think it is most important that means should be found for extending the itinerating libraries. There are some neighborhoods, no doubt, in which books may be procured, and in which good local libraries may be estab-