

CORRESPONDENCE.

SCHOOL LITERATURE.

To the Editor of the EDUCATIONAL RECORD:—

SIR,—I am very glad to see that the High School boys are getting up a Library, and I have no doubt that all friends of the school will do their best to ensure the success of that undertaking.

I beg to offer a suggestion with regard to the constitution of the Library. Might it not include a lending library of good and amusing fiction for the use of the younger boys? When I was a master, last autumn, in the High School, I was surprised (as an old English schoolboy) to find that the good, healthy novels of Marryat, Mayne Reid, Ballantyne, etc., were comparatively very little read, and that their place was taken by the odious "dime novels" of vulgarly depicted horrors, such as are issued by the million in New York. One day I had the pleasure of seizing a choice specimen of these compositions, and, before consigning it to the flames, I read just enough of it to convince me that a long course of reading among such abominable trash would do just about as much harm to the average third form boy as could well be done. But these dime novels cannot be *suppressed*, and the best plan, in my opinion, is to endeavour to *supersede* them; *i. e.*, to try to destroy their baneful attraction by setting up other books in their place that may prove more attractive. It might be objected that if Marryat and Ballantyne, etc., were more attractive than the dime novel, they *would* be read in its stead; but I think that an answer to this objection is sufficiently given by the difference in *price* between the two classes of books. Capt. Marryat's books, for instance, are (or were in my school days) a shilling, which I suppose would here be 30 cents. Now to a small boy's purse the difference between ten cents and thirty is pretty considerable, and we can hardly blame him if he keeps the thirty cents—if he has them—in his pocket; especially when we remember that, owing to bad print and cheap paper, the dime novel can offer about as much reading matter as the average novel of Marryat.

Now, Sir, it is heart-rending to think that the pure and beautiful mind of a boy should be polluted by low and poisonous literature. Schools contain quite enough of evil without this. If my plan be considered feasible by the Library Committee, I have no doubt that subscriptions will come in; and, if a nucleus be once formed, a trifling subscription—of, say, five cents for each boy per term, for the use of these books—would soon ensure the growth of a really good library. But of course all details with regard to the matter can be settled by the Committee. I merely make this suggestion in a general way, and without having any elaborate plan to put forward. Of the importance of the matter there can be no two opinions. We all know the old saying about making the nation's songs and letting him who will make their laws; and I venture to parody that saying and assert that if I may prescribe a boy's reading out of school, others are welcome to teach him and manage him in school as they like, and I will back my influence to be the greater. We know that among the *best* are the "pure in heart," and if purity is to be sapped in childhood, how is it ever to be re-established?

My letter is already long enough, but I should like to add that if my suggestion is approved by the Committee, I shall be only too glad to give any help I can in the carrying of it out.

I am, Sir, etc.,

N. PROWER.

Montreal, July 23rd.