

READING IN OUR SCHOOLS.

BY JACQUES.

AMONG the subjects taught in our schools, there is none that deserves more, but receives less, attention than Reading. This is no doubt partly owing to the fact, that our, in many respects, excellent educational system overlooks the importance of a subject that does not help the pupil to pass a written examination.

To discuss this question fully would require more space than could be devoted to a single article, so we shall confine ourselves for the present to the consideration of two points: (1) The importance of Reading as an accomplishment; (2) Some of the reasons why so many scholars in our schools are poor readers.

What accomplishment is there that gives more pleasure than good reading? But, how few in Ontario think of that! In every large school in the United States there is a teacher of elocution; but there are not at present in Ontario ten schools where reading is taught by one who has made the subject a specialty. Neither do parents recognize its importance; for while they willingly devote time and money to have their children taught music, they seem never to think that, of the two, Reading is the more valuable accomplishment. There are comparatively few who can become musicians, but almost every one can learn, yes, can teach himself, to read well.

Again, while there is one person who is really interested by good

music, twenty are pleased and instructed by good reading. Who has not often noticed at a musical and literary entertainment, that while the reading is going on, conversation ceases, but as soon as the music begins, the majority of the audience seem to think that the time has come for exchanging nice bits of gossip? We do not desire to decry music; we would encourage it in every way. It is refining, it is inspiring. But every one has not the gift of either singing or playing well. Where there is one who succeeds in learning to play or to sing well, there are twenty who, with even a less amount of practice, can learn to read so well that it is a pleasure to listen to them. "Eloquence charms the soul, song charms the sense."

Another advantage to be gained from reading aloud is that "the voice culture" necessary for this gives a delightful charm to the voice in conversation. What fascination we feel in listening to a good reader! What new meaning we see in some oft-told tale, when we hear it from the lips of an able elocutionist! The history of her time tells us that when Elizabeth Fry would go and read to the criminals in Newgate the parable of the Prodigal Son, the noblest in the land were glad to stand in that cold and dismal prison, by the side of felons and murderers, to share with them the privilege of witnessing the marvellous pathos which genius, taste and culture could infuse into a simple story.