

THE MONTHLY RECORD



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"IF I FORGET THEE, O JERUSALEM! LET MY RIGHT HAND FORGET HER CUNNING."—PSALM 137, v. 5

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CORRESPONDENCE.

Young Men's Association, Pugwash.

The meetings of this Association commenced last year, and during the winter a number of interesting and instructive lectures were delivered by various clergymen and others connected with the district. Since the opening of the present session some weeks ago, several gentlemen were kindly lent their services in forwarding the objects in view. And on Tuesday evening, the 23rd December, the Rev. George Harper, missionary in connexion with our Church, delivered a lecture on "Self-improvement," which was listened to throughout with marked attention. The lecturer said that he believed that, notwithstanding the great variety of human character, mankind were upon the whole pretty much upon a par in regard to general capacity, and the difference between one man and another arose more from the circumstances in which they were placed, the early habits which they formed, and the good or bad influences which were brought to bear upon them more particularly in the beginning of life. Hence the value to be attached to proper and judicious training in childhood and youth, the importance of associating with others of good character and sound principles, and the danger of contamination by keeping company with the vicious, idle, dissolute or unprincipled. It is not in the school or academy only that a person receives his education. A thousand influences are continually at work in moulding the youthful character. He assumed, however, as a fundamental principle, that every man is very much in his power in regard to self-improvement, by which he meant the harmonious development of all the faculties of the mind. Every one was sensible of possessing this power. Every one who has reached the age when he can think for himself, knows that he can choose his own company, and follow his own inclinations in

many respects altogether independantly of others. That is to say, there is no force or constraint compelling a young man who wishes to improve his mind, to be sober, industrious and well-behaved, to associate with those who can only show him a bad example. His time is in a great measure his own; and he may employ it according to his tastes and inclinations. He feels that he is a free agent, and by his own individual acts that he can pave the way either to happiness or misery, according to the plans he adopts and the courses which he pursues. Within certain limits, he knows he can be the architect of his own fortunes. By forming correct habits, and improving his talents and opportunities, whatever may be his condition in life, he cannot fail to perceive that, according to the laws of a just Providence, he is adopting a course the most likely to secure a certain measure of happiness. The lecturer next pointed out the importance of a knowledge of the human mind in promoting self-improvement; and this for two strong reasons; first, its importance to the individual himself, and secondly, its importance as bearing on the discharge of his duties to others. In itself it was one of the most noble and elevating studies in which the mental powers could be engaged. The man who has made the mental faculties a subject of study is better qualified for successfully applying those faculties than one who has never bestowed a thought upon the subject. Such study has a tendency to raise the individual above the influence of those numerous and unthought of prejudices which govern the great mass of mankind. It likewise creates a spirit of forbearance towards the weaknesses of others, and renders a man less ready to take offence at others merely because they may happen to differ from him in their judgement of many things. It was in the power of every man, more or less, to gain some acquaintance with this subject, without attempting to sound the depths of metaphysics; and the motives to this study

appeared still greater when it was considered that those powers of mind, which God has given us, were intended to exist for ever. It was an erroneous notion to regard one's education as finished when he left school. Self-improvement ought sedulously to be pursued to the very end of life. Not only were the motives to self-improvement of the loftiest description, but the opportunities for it, in the case of the majority at least of those whom he was now addressing, were very considerable. They were greater than those possessed by many in the highly favoured land, from which their fathers came forth, to colonize this vast continent, which is destined yet to be the seat of more than one mighty empire capable of rivalling Britain, great as she is in the arts of war or peace. Their opportunities of self-improvement, he confidently affirmed without any fear of contradiction, were equal if not superior to those enjoyed by any country in the world. In the first place, they enjoyed a temperate and improving climate where the faculties both of mind and body reach the greatest perfection,—a climate upon the whole inferior in no degree to the old country, which has produced so many names famous in every department of speculation and enterprise. They had the long winter nights beside the blazing log fire in their comfortable homes, where they could uninterruptedly pursue their progress in whatever branch of study they might wish to engage. They had no hard, laborious work to engage in, like many a white slave at Home (toiling in smoky factories, where the fresh breath of heaven seldom enters,) and whose scanty earnings barely sufficed to keep himself and his family alive. No; here the workman is counted worthy of, and receives, his hire; nor are his hours of labour unreasonably protracted. Then again, they were to consider the advantages of their local situation—they had the benefit of the resources of the smart, clever, bustling American on the one side, and of the industrious and enterprising Englishman,