

The Reading Course

John Bright and the English Tongue.

BY THE REV. JAMES LUNDEN.

In reading the best books there is a double benefit: (1) the acquirement of information; (2) the formation of style. It is about the latter accomplishment that I now write. In my youthful days there were no Epworth Leagues, and, therefore, no "reading circles"; but our Sunday School teacher (a man of light and leading to-day in English commercial and political life) organized a Mutual Improvement Society, of which I acted as secretary for a number of years. Our weekly debates stirred up within us a strong desire to seek some training in the art of expression in writing and speaking. This led to the formation of a class under the leadership of a graduate of Oxford, for the analytical study of Milton's Paradise Lost. Before the class was started, a question arose among us as to whether we could better gain our end by taking up the study of Latin, or by confining ourselves to the works of the great masters of English speech. At that time John Bright was in the fulness of his powers, and stood before the nation, apart from politics, as its most consummate orator and as the great conservator of the purity of the English tongue. With the audacity of youth I wrote to him, and asked the question which we could scarcely decide. He replied, with a kindness that was characteristic, in a long letter, in which in a very careful and detailed manner he elaborated his views and gave advice. That treasure (as I think I am justified in calling it) I unfortunately lost in shipwreck. However, though the letter perished, its contents I could not forget. In substance Mr. Bright wrote as follows: He did not consider much Latin or much grammar necessary; but he urged as essential the constant study of standard English works. He advised the attuning of the ear to the purity and rhythm of the English tongue at its best, by reading aloud the productions of its great masters; and he thought that the practice would be especially helpful if it could be done in the presence of, say, an intelligent schoolmaster who could correct any faults. He recommended daily conversation with educated persons as also of prime importance. This counsel which I now send to the press for the first time, believing it will be of interest and use to many, and to the members of our reading circles specially, is valuable because of its authorship; and, also, because it carries with it the stamp of self-evident though often forgotten truth. It is well known that John Bright was an unwearied student of the English Bible, also of Milton, Macaulay and other great writers; and from such sources, as from a well undeified, he drew the faultless speech and the matchless eloquence for which he was so distinguished.

I may add that in connection with our League here we have a "reading circle." We are perusing at present, "Makers of Methodism." Two readers are appointed for each evening, and a short interval is arranged for music. The dictionary and encyclopedia are in frequent requisition. Interesting conversations often arise during the course of the reading. Our meetings are held in different homes and as many as twenty have been in attendance. We com-

menced with only one set of books—this shows that good can be accomplished with slender means. We always close with family worship. It is our purpose to hold one or two public meetings and give the people the benefit of our study.

Mill Village, Nova Scotia.

Among the Circles.

BRAVE AVENUE, Brantford, has a vigorous Reading Circle of some twenty or thirty members. Meetings are held at the parsonage every two weeks. The Circle is arranging for a course of University Extension Lectures.

REV. G. W. DEAN, of Portage la Prairie, writes: "We have started a Reading Circle with fifteen or twenty members. The Circle did good work last year, but the plans are much better laid out, and on a broader basis, this time."

THE Corresponding Secretary of the Walkerton League writes: "In our Reading Circle we have finished the study of 'Making of the Empire,' and 'Makers of Methodism.' The study has left our circle of



JOHN BRIGHT.

young people proud to belong to the British Empire, and prouder still to be connected with the Methodist Church."

THE League at Kensington, London, has a fine Reading Circle. Fifteen members, and nine full sets of books.

THE Reading Circle of Douglas Church, Montreal, has an active membership of twenty, under the enthusiastic leadership of Mr. A. Mossman, who writes: "The utmost interest prevails, and we are certain that the Circle will prove a source of strength to our League."

Suggested Programmes.

MAKERS OF METHODISM

NOTE.—The figures in brackets indicate the time allotted for each part of the programme. Including ten minutes for devotional exercises, the meetings are planned to last one hour and a half.

No. 1.

ROLL-CALL.—Quotations from *Overland*. (10)

LESSON.—Chapters 5 and 6. (10)

TABLE TALK.—Local Preachers and Their Work. (20)

PAPER.—Our Duty to the Criminal. (10)

CHARACTER SKETCH.—John Howard. (10)

No. 2.

ROLL-CALL.—Quotations from the *Canadian Epworth Era*. (10)

LESSON.—Chapters 7, 8, 9. (10)

DEBATE.—Would the Methods of early Methodism be as effective if used to-day? (20)

TABLE TALK.—Eloquent Preachers in Methodism since Whitefield. (15)

CHARACTER SKETCHES.—Geo. Whitefield. (5)

Countess of Huntingdon. (5)

John Fletcher. (5)

QUESTION DRAWER. (5)

No. 3.

ROLL-CALL.—Quotations from the *Missionary Outlook*. (10)

LESSON.—Chapters 10 and 11. (10)

PAPER.—Duty of the Methodist Church to Missions. (20)

TABLE TALK.—How can interest in our Missionary work be increased? (20)

CHARACTER SKETCHES.—Barbara Heck. (5)

Dr. Coke. (5)

QUESTION DRAWER. (10)

No. 4.

ROLL-CALL.—Quotations from the *Christian Guardian*. (10)

LESSON.—Chapters 12 and 13. (10)

PAPER.—Methodism in Ireland. (15)

The Pioneers of Methodism, and what we owe them. (20)

CHARACTER SKETCHES.—Ashbury. (5)

Gideon Ouseley. (10)

QUESTION DRAWER. (5)

NOTE.—The time allotted for the Lesson is not intended for reading the chapters, as that is supposed to be done at leisure. It affords the opportunity to speak of specially beautiful passages, and to refer to facts and incidents that have made a deep impression.

MAKING OF THE EMPIRE.

No. 1.

ROLL-CALL.—Quotations from Tenison. (10)

LESSON.—The Story of Newfoundland. (10)

TABLE TALK.—The origin of the present troubles with France re fishing rights. What are these rights? (20)

PAPER.—The Pioneer Colony. (10)

PAPER.—Should Newfoundland enter Confederation? (10)

QUESTION DRAWER. (5)

No. 2.

ROLL-CALL.—Quotations from Coleridge. (10)

LESSON.—Bermuda and the West Indies. (10)

PAPER.—Bermuda as a Winter Resort. (10)

PAPER.—Products of the West Indies. (10)

TABLE TALK.—Value of Colonial Possessions to Great Britain. (20)

CHARACTER SKETCH.—Christopher Columbus. (5)

QUESTION DRAWER. (5)

No. 3.

ROLL-CALL.—Quotations from Milton. (10)

LESSON.—Central America, Gibraltar, and Malta. (10)

PAPER.—The countries of South America and their populations. (10)

PAPER.—The Nicaragua Canal. (10)

PAPER.—The Siege of Gibraltar. (10)

CHARACTER SKETCH.—Sir Walter Raleigh. (5)

QUESTION DRAWER. (5)

No. 4.

ROLL-CALL.—Quotations from Macaulay. (10)

LESSON.—The Story of India. (10)

TABLE TALK.—Imperial Federation. (10)

PAPER.—The Sepoy Rebellion. (10)

PAPER.—Position of Britain in India to-day. (10)

CHARACTER SKETCH.—Havelock, the Christian Soldier. (5)

QUESTION DRAWER. (5)