

is, and how it can best be done, is one of the most important educational questions of the day. The JOURNAL aims to help in settling it, and will continue to urge it upon the attention of teachers throughout the country. Teachers and others are requested to offer brief suggestions, through its columns, regarding the best means of establishing and conducting debating societies, literary societies, reading circles, evening classes, libraries, &c. The first thing to be done is to attend to the reading of the country. To change much that is now done, and to supply reading matter for those who do not now read at all. The Editor of the *Pacific School and Home Journal*, in urging this question, says: "We once heard Anna Dickinson say that there was but one good way to save human souls—and that is to 'out-bid the devil for them.' So in this case—if the thousands of young men who now, rapidly and surely, are led to ruin, are to be saved and led to a better and more useful life, it must be by offering them something better, more ennobling than the 'grog-shop.'"

"We repeat it—let a library be established in every little village. A library not merely where books are kept to be taken out once a week; but a place where young and old, parents with their sons and daughters, may meet every evening for conversation, and song and reading. A place to which a young man may go with anticipation of refined and ennobling pleasures, and from which he may seek his couch with a clear conscience."

—"The Superintendent now says: 'We have excellent courses of study, the best of school books, clean and comfortable school rooms, earnest and faithful teachers, an active and progressive committee,' and we predict we shall have most successful schools the coming year."

So speaks a New Hampshire paper of Superintendent Simonds, and his schools. The prediction made will undoubtedly be verified. The five points of excellence named cover the whole ground. The first question is settled in Canada. The second is also pretty definitely and satisfactorily fixed. Certain limits are laid down within which local authorities may exercise options. The other three are in the hands of the people themselves, and our advice to them is, if you have not already secured the fifth requisite, "an active and progressive committee, or trustee board," get it next January, and you may rest assured that the third and fourth clauses of the above quotation will receive attention. Select your wisest and most liberal men as school trustees.

—The report of the Provincial Teachers' Convention held in August can be obtained from the Secretary, James Hughes, Public School Inspector, Toronto. The price is only ten cents. Inspectors and others should order early, as only a limited number of copies are printed. Several associations have passed resolutions ordering a copy for each of their members. This practice should be more common. Every county association ought to be affiliated with the Provincial Association, and purchasing copies of the Provincial Report would be one means of securing this end.

Contributions and Correspondence.

ENGLISH LITERATURE AND ITS PLACE IN POPULAR EDUCATION.

BY FRANCIS H. UNDERWOOD, A.M., AUTHOR OF "HANDBOOK OF ENGLISH LITERATURE."

The place which the study of literature should hold among other scholastic pursuits is hardly doubtful. While other studies are pursued mainly for discipline, literature is at once a means and an end of culture. Language is the most marvellous instrument of human thought; and its study employs our noblest and strongest powers, as well as our most subtle perceptions and refined tastes; and in literature, as the appropriate end of linguistic studies, we derive the highest pleasures of which our natures are capable.

Literature is a part of the world's history, and, in many respects, the most important part. The rise and fall of dynasties, and the changes in forms of government, are chiefly important on account of the light they throw on the progress of political science, and the hope they give of the advance of mankind towards justice and equality. But the real life of a nation is preserved in its literature; and the student who is familiar with the personal memoirs, letters, plays, and songs of any era, has a better knowledge of the character and condition of the people than all the formal histories can give him.

Instruction in English literature should go on with other branches in equal step. Any well-disciplined child of fourteen years (and perhaps less) is ready to receive judicious lessons in this department. For this purpose it is not necessary to begin with Chaucer, nor to follow any rigid rule of chronology. Bacon and all the philosophers, and Taylor and all the theologians, may be reserved for maturer years; but the teacher can take works of acknowledged merit that are capable of being easily understood, and lead his charge through pleasant fields, until, by imperceptible degrees, they reach the heights. When they have been accustomed to notice peculiarities of style and modes of thought, and have, in other respects, sufficient maturity of mind, they can trace the development of language historically, and view the treasures of our literature as in a moving panorama.

It will be advisable, in all cases where the means allow, to read certain works entire. Thus Shakespeare cannot be profitably studied by means of selections; but the best of his plays should be read from Hudson's or Rolfe's editions. No separate scenes are either satisfactory or instructive. Other works may be named for thorough reading, such as Milton's "Comus," Goldsmith's "Traveller" and "Vicar of Wakefield," Lowell's "Vision of Sir Launfal," Longfellow's "Evangeline," Whittier's "Snow-bound," Emerson's "May Day," and one or two of Tennyson's "Idyls of the King."

But all educators know that the cases in which complete works of this kind can be procured in sufficient numbers for the use of a school will be exceptional. And, in any event, it will be desirable to supplement this course with some volume of selections arranged in historical order, and containing the necessary biographical, critical, and linguistic notes. The benefit of such a course of instruction introduced into the grammar schools, and continued in the high schools, would be incalculable. The teacher would make a daily study of the author from whom the lesson was to be taken. He would fill out the narrow outline of the biography. He would illustrate and refine upon the critical estimates, giving his own views, and stimulating the pupils to examine for themselves, and to form habits of independent judgment. It is doubtful whether