

answers, "These long winter vacations of ours ought to bring in their own harvest, sown in the minds and memories of men, there to blossom and bear fruit while life may last. John Milton found, as he told his nephew Phillip, that his views never flowed so freely as between September and March, and that in a latitude not farther South than ours. If for us also this should be a season favourable to the cultivation and growth of thought and knowledge, we cannot certainly plead want of leisure as an excuse for remaining at a stand still."

Mr. McGee proceeds to give some excellent advice with regard to what he calls family reading. If this advice is to be followed, and it should be, I need hardly ask how much more easily it could be followed if we had a free public library.

ADVANTAGES OF A FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY.

There are other reasons for advocating the foundation and support of free public libraries. The interests of general morality are thereby served. "We all know," said Lord Stanley, in a speech delivered at the opening of the Birmingham Free Library, "how much immorality may arise simply from persons of an excitable temperament being without sufficient mental occupation."

Let me add what those know well who have had to study questions in history, philosophy, or government or political economy, that access to a good library is indispensable for their researches.

Look at our present condition. If the young machinist, engineer, architect, chemist, engraver, painter, instrument-maker, musician, or student, or any branch of science or literature, should wish to consult a valuable and especially a rare and costly work, he must buy it, often import it at an expense he can ill afford, or he must be indebted for its use to the liberality of private corporations or individuals.

FREE LIBRARIES IN BRITAIN.

In Britain, the course of education as regards the masses has not made such progress as its earnest promoters would desire. Yet the Government there does spend money to about a million sterling annually on education; and some years ago the Imperial Parliament gave up a revenue of £1,500,000 sterling, in order that paper and newspapers, which performed so important a part in the thread of knowledge, might be free from taxation. Further in 1851 and 1855 that Parliament passed an Act under which free libraries and museums are established and flourish in 25 English towns. Among these towns, the most prominent, are Liverpool, Manchester, and Birmingham.

The establishment of these free libraries depends entirely on the will of the inhabitants. There, if two-thirds of the rate-payers agree that they will have such a library, an assessment not exceeding 1d in the £ per annum may be laid on the real property holders for the purpose. In Liverpool, the Reference Library has over 50,000 volumes, with an average issue every day of 1,600 books, and a yearly collection of 420,590 volumes.

LIBRARIES IN THE UNITED STATES AND BOSTON.

But among our neighbours, in the city of Boston, Mass., is a free public library, which, so far as I know, the largest and noblest of the kind in the world. It is contained in a building which was erected for the purpose by the city authorities, and finished some eight years ago, at a cost, as regards the building, of \$360,000 of our money. On the 1st August last, it contained 133,016 volumes, and 32,558 pamphlets. During the previous year it had circulated over 197,000 volumes, or an average of over 707 per day.

NECESSITY FOR A FREE LIBRARY.

The strongest motives may be urged in support of this proposal. I need say nothing of the pleasures of the cultivation of polite letters—of their humanizing tendency. "Were I to pray for a taste," says Sir John Herschell, "which should stand me in stead under every variety of circumstances, and be a source of happiness and cheerfulness to me during life, and a shield against all ills, however, things might go amiss and the world frown upon me, it would be a taste for reading. Give a man this taste and the means of gratifying it, and you can hardly fail of making him a happy man, unless indeed you put into his hands a most perverse selection of books. You place him in contact with the best society in every period of history—with the wisest, the wittiest, the tenderest, the bravest, and the purest characters who have adorned humanity. You may make him a denizen of all nations, a contemporary of all ages—the world has been created for him. I by no means say that the literature should or could satisfy all the desires of the human heart for the heart hath depths which nothing human can reach, which can only be fathomed by the Great Creator himself. But of all human enjoyments, none more inspiring or elevating—none purer can be named than that of literature.

"Think what a book is," says Moncton Milnes, "what each volume in a library is. It is a portion of the eternal mind, caught in its progress through the world, stamped in an instant, and pre-

served through eternity. Think what it is: that enormous amount of human sympathy and intelligence that is contained in these volumes; and think what it is that this sympathy should be communicated to the masses of the people. Compare the state of the man who is really well acquainted with the whole part of literature upon the subject on which he is speaking, and with which his mind is imbued, with that of the solitary artisan upon whom the light of genius has dawned in some great truth, in some noble aspiration, in some high idea—resting there unable to accomplish itself, unable to realize its meaning, and probably ending in nothing but despair. Compare the state of that man, such as he would be without books, with what that man would be with books. So that it is only books that can save him from the most exaggerated conclusions, from the falsest doctrines, and all those evils which may damage and even destroy the masses of mankind. It is only, remember, what lies in those books that makes all the difference between the wildest socialism that ever passed into the mind of man, and the deductions and careful processes of the mind of the student who will learn humility by seeing what others have taught before him; and who will gain from the sympathy of ages intelligence and sense for himself." One would experience no extraordinary emotions in standing by the tombs which contain the ashes of a race of kings. I will also confess to no ordinary emotions when surrounded by the volumes which the departed great have bequeathed to posterity in "thoughts that breathe and words that burn." It is a solemn spirit-stirring thought that "literature is the immortality of speech—that it embalms for all ages the departed kings of learning, and watches over their repose in the eternal pyramids of fame." "Libraries," says Bacon, "are as the shrines where all the relics of the ancient saints, full of true virtue, and that without delusion or importance, are preserved and reposed." "What a happiness it is," says a good old Bishop of Norwich, "that without all offence of necromancy, I may here call upon any of the ancient worthies of learning, whether human or divine, and confer with them of all my doubt, that I can at pleasure summon up whole synods of reverend fathers and acute doctors from all the coasts of the earth, to give their well-studied judgments on all points and questions which I may propose." Let us remember that whatever be our material riches, these are as nothing compared with the spiritual and intellectual being called man, whom the Almighty has appointed as their possessor. Let us remember that in man there is nothing great but his spiritual and intellectual nature; that that nature remains unformed and undeveloped unless it is made familiar with all knowledge, not only of the fleeting present, but also of the hoary past; that if we would be strong in intellectual might, we must not slavishly derive our knowledge at second-hand from contemporaries of other lands,—we must learn and meditate and originate for ourselves by the mental processes of our own natures; we must gather knowledge for ourselves from our own intellectual wealth.

23. READING AND WRITING IN FRANCE.

Two maps, just published in Paris, are entitled, "France that can read and France that can write." In the latter the districts in which persons married in 1866 could not sign the register—in a proportion varying from thirty to seventy-five per cent—are marked in black. Fifty-five departments are thus indicated, comprising all the south, centre and west of France. The ten departments where the largest number of newly married have been able to sign (the others being only from 1.44 to 6.77 per cent.) are the Lower Rhine, Meuse, Vosges, Haute Marne, Meurthe, Jura, and Manche. The average of the illiterate married in 1866 is thirty-three per cent. The *Siecle*, which sums up these statistics, is horrified: "One-third of France unable either to read or write! Fifty-five departments out of eighty-nine in which the number of illiterate persons is from thirty to seventy-five per cent. Is it not a shame? And we talk of a new military organization! Let us rather busy ourselves with the instruction of this black phalanx of ignorance; let us devote to this national work a tithe of the millions we uselessly squander. Let us begin by beating Prussia on this ground. As regards primary instruction we are in the lowest rank of the European powers, and we imagine ourselves to be marching at the head of civilization!"

24. WRITERS OF THE NEW SCHOOL.

Men who aspire to write now are losing more and more the old-fashioned love of books and letters. They want to be thinkers, or to renovate history, or to promote some views on things in general. This may be an improvement on the old notion. In an age which, like our own, is or pretends to be penetrated with earnestness and practicality though we do not seem to get on much the faster for it all, one could not expect people to preserve the sentimental affection for mere literature which was so strong among writers of one and two generations ago. One evil result of this will be a loss of savor