

of the married man than upon the unmarried man, for the former has not only the moral duty to improve his own mind, but also to foster and direct the minds of his family. And a weekly attendance at the Debating Club would produce ample subjects for his examination and discussion among his family from week to week. Each week would bring with it a different object of interest and value to present them, either from Shakspeare or Newton, from Locke or from Gibbon; all the rich gems of ancient lore, and all the jewels which deck the modern throne of intellect would there await his call. Having such advantages, together with a proper degree of parental guidance in other matters, the child, as I have before stated, would be naturally led to follow in the footsteps of his parents, and thus the principal step would be reached towards the banishment of one half of the crime and misery in the world. It is ignorance, my friends, which crowds our station houses, which fills our jails, and swells so greatly the criminal calendar. Were mankind more generally educated, were they all initiated into the distinction between right and wrong, and capacitated to feel the moral obligation which lies upon them as responsible beings, I believe there would not be one half of the present amount of crime committed. Thus, as fathers, as men, as christians, we should feel ourselves bound to inculcate by every means in our power, those principles which would tend to make man better, bearing in mind the words of Rousseau, that: "Science in general may be compared to a coin of great value, but of use to its possessor, only inasmuch as it is communicated to others; it is valuable only as a commodity of traffic."

When I look at the Debating Club in a general point of view, I see in it a proportional amount of advantages for the inculcation of doctrines or ideas. The history of Great Britain, during the past age, possesses a very vivid example of the influence which Debating Clubs for political purposes, exercised throughout the country during that period. They were then the principal vents of public opinion, and it was almost solely through them that Horne Tooke, Goodwin, Muir and Palmer, obtained their popularity and influence. So great at last became the influence of those Clubs, that Mr. Pitt deemed legislative interference necessary, and he accordingly passed a Bill, by which their meetings were prohibited under a penalty of fine and imprisonment. Now setting aside the question of the amount of good or bad consequences which might have resulted from those Political Debating Clubs, at that period, I would merely remark, that it appears self-evident to me,

and I think would to all after a moment's reflection, that if those Clubs were able to exert the influence they did in enunciating political doctrines, they may be brought to bear with equal force in spreading around the seeds of knowledge.

But although Mr. Pitt, while Prime Minister, considered it necessary, for the preservation of himself and his party, to prohibit the holding of the Political Debating Clubs, yet he was not ignorant of their advantages in training the youthful mind to debate. It is supposed that the first speech he made was at one of those Clubs, at the Old Bailey in London; the first speech Canning made was at another Club in London; the first speeches that Burke made were at a similar one, called the Robin Hood; and to those brilliant orators who first exercised their powers in those Clubs, I may add the names of Steele, and Fox, and Sheridan, and Wilberforce. Who can tell the influence those Clubs might have had upon the after career of those great men? We have also the names of many illustrious persons who were connected with Debating Clubs, devoted solely to literary subjects. Some of the greatest philosophers, orators, poets and historians of the present day, passed in their youth many a pleasant evening within their walls. In Edinburgh, one was established as early as 1764, and called "The Speculative," by a number of young men who were students of the University of Edinburgh, and in the list of members in this little Club, may be seen the names of Sir Walter Scott, of Robertson, Dugald Stewart, of Jeffries, Lord Brougham, Lord Lansdowne and Lord Dudley. Many an orator, says a late writer, who has since delighted and edified mankind, was trained in the Speculative. I might mention that it was in this Society that Sir James Mackintosh discovered his oratorical powers, and decided, upon the suggestion of one of the members, to leave medicine, which he was then studying, for the bar. Among the published correspondence of Roscoe, the celebrated historian of Leo the Tenth, is the following letter, addressed to the Marquis of Lansdowne: "I have," said he, "for upwards of ten years, been a member of a little Society composed of about a dozen persons, and who attended once each week at each other's house for the discussion of literary subjects." This Society was obliged to be broken up upon the passing of Mr. Pitt's Bill, of which Roscoe, in the same letter, complains very sadly to the Marquis. Among the members was Dr. Currie, author of the Life of Burns, Doctor Rutter and Professor Smyth. Nor amongst the advocates and members who have adorned the history of