

THE ABUSE OF FREE LIBRARIES.

At its recent meeting in Cleveland, the American Library Association heard some candid criticism from its President, Mr. John Cotton Dana, Librarian of the Public Library of Denver. He feared that his enthusiasm for the free public library was born more of contagion than of conviction. In the public library he said you have stored a few thousand books including, of course, the best books of all time—which no one reads—and a generous percentage of fiction of the cheaper sort. To this place come in good proportion the idle and the lazy, and also the people who cannot endure the burden of a thought, and who fancy they are improving their minds, while, in fact, they are simply letting the cool water of knowledge trickle through the sieve of an idle curiosity. The more persistent visitors are largely men who have either failed in a career, or never had a career, or do not wish a career.

Mr. Dana charged the free public library with relieving the idle, the incompetent and the indifferent reader from the necessity—would he have books—of going to work to earn them. It checks, he continued, the serious reader in collecting a library of his own, adapted to the wants and tastes of himself and his family. It leads parents to regard with indifference the general reading of their children, just as the free public school may lead them to be indifferent to their formal education.

This and much more in the same strain was loudly applauded by Mr. Dana's large and representative audience of librarians. It is evident that the abuses of free public libraries have led to much searching of heart among their chief officers. They are feeling, as the teachers of the public schools also feel, that they cannot take the place of the parent who abdicates

from one of the primary responsibilities of parenthood. A child whose father and mother hand over its mental and moral culture to the teacher and the librarian virtually becomes an orphan. Neither public school nor public library can do its duty towards its pupils and readers without the hearty and intelligent co-operation of parents. Mr. Dana's address was clearly intended to traverse the easy optimism and self gratulatory vein usual in presidential utterances. His criticisms will bear fruit in pointing to the abuses and losses inevitable when the form of gratuity is impressed upon a comfort or a luxury which each should buy for himself. The form of gratuity is a form only; at great and increasing cost a service is proffered which should be rendered, not in the free public library but in the home; or, if a compromise must be made, then by the free public library watchfully directed from the home.

HENRY HUDSON AND THE N.W. PASSAGE.

When, one after another, the host of early explorers who followed Columbus set sail from Europe it was not a new country, but a new sea, of which they were in search.

They hoped to find, amid the islands of the vast archipelago, some outlying portions of which had been discovered by Columbus, a route to India.

Among these explorers, in the year 1609, was Henry Hudson, in the little ship of 80 tons, the Half-Moon.

At first Hudson sought for a north-east passage around Norway, but at length he turned to the west, and reaching the American shores about the latitude of Newfoundland, he sailed up and down the coast, exploring inlet after inlet, until he reached the lower bay at the mouth of the