Libraries and Readers

W. E. FOSTER

James Bruce
Univ College
Toronto

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BY

WILLIAM E. FOSTER

Librarian of the Providence Public Library

Free libraries are engines for *creating* the habit and power of enjoying first-class literature, and thus carrying forward the work of civilization which is commenced in the primary school.

WILLIAM STANLEY JEVONS.

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PREFACE.

THE purpose and significance of this little book should not be misunderstood. At various times during the past few years the writer has been asked to present some phase of library work for the consideration of his fellow-citizens; sometimes in the form of an address or lecture in his own city or elsewhere; sometimes in the form of a paper read before a meeting of the American Library Association, or before bodies of teachers; and sometimes in the form of an article contributed to the *Library Journal* or other publications. It has been interesting to notice, in the treatment of these various phases of the subject, how wide and suggestive is the field thus opened, and how intimately this matter of reading, and the use of books and of libraries, are connected with the daily life of our generation. It is thus that the material of this book has accumulated.

Yet suggestions and counsel on the use of books have by no means been wanting before this; nor have these books been wanting in value and effectiveness. A writer might well hesitate, therefore, before adding another book to their number. Yet the vigilant publisher of the *Library Journal*, whose untiring interest in everything relating to the advancement of library work is well known, has judged that the peculiar

evolution of this volume from actual contact with the problems and experiences of library administration, entitled it to a place of its own; and there has been a very general request for such a volume from those who have listened to the delivery of the addresses referred to. It is therefore given to the public in this form.

The book is not a treatise. Although various phases of the question are considered, there is no attempt to make this volume cover the ground exhaustively. The important question of fiction reading, though incidentally referred to, is not here treated at length. The equally important question of relations between libraries and schools is conspicuous by its absence, for the reason that the papers in which the writer has discussed this matter are elsewhere published * almost simultaneously with this volume.

Mr. Emerson has somewhere maintained that a man should be, above and before all things else, a man;—not a teacher or "a thinker", but a man teaching and "a man thinking." The writer disavows all claim of being an author or a lecturer, and will be abundantly satisfied if the reader of these pages shall attribute them to "a librarian writing" and "a librarian speaking", and in this way using two very effectual methods of enforcing the principles of his work.

PROVIDENCE PUBLIC LIBRARY, Nov. 1, 1882.

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* "Libraries and schools," edited by S. S. Green.

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CHAPTER VIII

Libraries and Readers.

I. SOME HINTS ON RIGHT READING.*

At the outset, some one may be asking himself;—"But what is meant here by 'right reading'? Is it right methods of reading, or, reading the right books? It is both. We are not doing ourselves full justice, even while reading the best books, if our habits of reading be defective; nor will it avail to have adopted the most approved methods, should the material of our reading be valueless. Let us then consider these two sides of the question, in succession; giving our attention first to the subject of "the right books to read."

(A) *Material.*—But some one at once inquires: "Well, and how are you going to lay down rules? The 'right' books for some one else to read may not be the right ones for me,

* This chapter was originally delivered as a lecture in Providence, and afterwards in Philadelphia. This fact will account for certain peculiarities in the form of presenting the subject.

and *vice versâ*." Very good. That gives us then, does it not, one principle to guide us in the selection of our reading, namely; personal adaptation.

(1) *Personal adaptation.*—No one person is constituted, and no one develops, in a precisely identical way with any one else. He is an individual, and it is his individuality which should characterize his thought, and determine his selection of reading as well. Is a man then to follow his own liking, solely? By no means, yet that will constitute one element in the choice to be made. Is it to be merely a question of business profit or loss,—this line of reading being of direct, practical service, while another is not so obviously related to his work? Not this wholly, although this also is an entirely legitimate element. Is it to be simply a question of harmony with his temperament, of stimulating his activity, or of quickening his faculties? Again, as you will readily admit, not from any one of these by itself, but from all of them in conjunction, do we derive a legitimate guiding principle of selection; and one which, by the way, we may profitably bear in mind in guiding the reading of young people. The highest civilizations have always been those in which the tendency has been, not to produce a nation of duplicates,—as

a farmer would do with a field of vegetables, or the manufacturer with a paper of pins. On the contrary, to preserve the same expressive imagery as used by Mr. Charles Francis Adams, jr., in a recent address,* the tendency should be to develop a race of separately organized and independently constituted individualities, as you would train your trees, "watching them year after year, and seeing them grow, and shoot out, and develop," each in its own way.

Now turning from the abstract principle to the concrete illustration, the better to apprehend the matter, let us suppose the case of a manufacturer. It is for his interest, certainly, to learn, (by reading), the most that he can about mills, the principles of civil engineering and architecture determining their construction; the principles of mechanics observed in the operation of the machinery; the climate and soil suited to the raising of the raw material; the conditions affecting its transportation to his mill; the natural and ruling markets for his manufactured goods; the relative importance of his industry among the commercial interests of the country; the

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* *Library Journal*, v. 1. p. 438-39. Also printed in "The public library and the public schools." C. F. Adams, jr. Boston, 1879. p. 9-10.

effects of his products upon the health and well-being of the community; and the tracing of similar effects in the history of this and other countries. Not to carry this farther, it is easy to see how a field of inquiry and research has been opened to him, merely from its bearing upon his individual work, which is not limited to any one department of knowledge, but which includes physical science, and the applied sciences, as well; which involves social and commercial problems, and has its ethical and historical aspects. Dr. Channing most appropriately indicates, in his lecture on "Self-culture," how we may find in our "condition or occupation" a means of culture;* and not less fitting is Mr. Atkinson's suggestion, (in his little volume, "On the right use of books," which you will allow me to recommend most heartily for your reading), "to make your calling and occupation . . . an instrument of education."†

(2) *A symmetrical development.*—Another principle is that which Dr. Peabody embodied in his Harvard Divinity School address, and which Mr. Hale develops more fully in his excellent volume, "What career?;"—namely, that every man

* Channing's "Works", (ed. of 1875,) p. 25.

† "On the right use of books." W. P. Atkinson. Boston, 1878. p. 46.

"should have a vocation and an avocation."* He should have some channel of thought, (and of reading), outside the daily routine of his work. How shall this be determined? Is it not by calling into action a class of faculties different from those of our routine work;—by developing our powers in more than one direction?

Very well then; we have this as a second principle, that a man's reading should tend to develop him symmetrically; that our reading is not to be a one-sided development, either as being exclusively general, or exclusively technical. I know not how better to set forth the clear, vivid distinction between these two fields of reading, than by quoting a passage from De Quincey, which is in danger, it is true, of becoming threadbare. Nevertheless, it is directly to the point, in this connection. "There is", he says, "the literature of knowledge, and the literature of power. . . . The first speaks to the mere discursive understanding; the second . . to the higher understanding . . through affections of pleasure or sympathy."† Going back to our illustration, we see that the manufacturer is using the "literature of knowledge" when he is reading

* "What career?" E. E. Hale. Boston, 1878. p. 98–102.

† De Quincey's "Eighteenth century," (ed. of 1876, Boston), p. 383.

the annual report of the treasury department, to ascertain the quantity of manufactured goods exported or imported. But it is the "literature of power" by which he is moved when he reads one of Wordsworth's poems or one of Shakespeare's plays; when he reads Webster's oration at Plymouth or Scott's story of "Kenilworth." It is the imagination which is most actively addressed in the latter case; and it is this side of literature which, taking the world through, has the larger number of readers, and is read with the more absorbing interest.

Observe, however; this principle which we are discussing does not claim for this imaginative element in literature our exclusive attention. It is no such one-sided principle as that. It is true that where a man is impelled, by the exigencies of his trade or profession, to give his especial attention to that, and to the literature of technical knowledge, for him the injunction is appropriate, to cultivate more largely the element of imagination. But where one errs in this way and goes to this extreme, there are one hundred who, by nature and temperament, are likely to devote undue attention to the literature of imagination; and "it is a poor rule which does not work both ways." If I find that fiction is not only attractive to me, but absorbingly attractive,

if, while I experience a delight in all which develops the imaginative side of my intellect, I have a distaste for anything which requires close thought and accurate knowledge, then I may be sure that I shall not become a "symmetrical man," in the sense of Lord Bacon's Essay* in this way. I must systematically cultivate some branch of science which will draw out and strengthen my reasoning faculties, and counterbalance this one-sided growth, by a corresponding growth in another direction. And, fascinating as is the field of romance and poetry, yet to one who rightly undertakes them, there can be no more captivating pursuits than certain lines of scientific, or literary, or historical investigation.

(3) *Attended with a controlling interest.*— "Doubtless all very true," do you say, "but where to begin is the difficulty." Nothing is, perhaps, more disheartening to one who has remained unfamiliar with actual study and systematic investigation, than to contemplate the extent and the magnitude of the field, which seems to offer no "easiest point" at which to begin. Well, but why not begin at some point where you are interested? And this gives us our third prin-

* Bacon's "Essays." ("Of studies.") (Whately's ed., Boston, 1867), p. 472–73.

ciple, namely; that a genuine and living interest in a subject is one of the most effectual promoters of appropriate reading. Several familiar and even homely illustrations will serve to enforce this principle. For instance, To "strike while the iron is hot" is not more absolutely the way to seize upon the right moment for accomplishing the object, than to enter on a line of reading or study while the mind is in a state of lively interest respecting it. Again, for a carpenter to use a plane, pushing all the while against the grain, may indeed remove some portions of the wood, but to go with the grain is not more sure to effect the desired object than to develop an effective use of books by pursuing such lines of reading as correspond with one's preëminent tastes and interest. Again, to work in a dark room, with a strong electric light turned directly on the object to be examined, will not more surely bring into observation every little detail than the living interest which animates a reader will illuminate every step of the ground which he is investigating.

Perhaps some one says: "This does not apply to me, for I have not even that amount of familiarity which would furnish an interest on which to begin." Should that be any one's state of mind, (and there can be no doubt that it rep-

resents the position of many), it indicates simply this;—that his habits of observation have not been sufficiently cultivated for him to perceive whether the matter has any interest for him or not. Now this sort of misapprehension is very general, and sometimes takes shape in such a feeling as this, respecting the books in a public library: "This library is all very well for those who are able to give much time and elaborate study to some technical point, but as for throwing light on common, every-day matters, that of course is not to be expected." It is easy to see how this view of the matter would suggest itself, but it is clearly erroneous. In some libraries, as you know, the plan * is pursued of systematic daily references to what the library contains on some matter which is of current interest on that day; which men read about in the morning papers at the breakfast-table, and talk about on their way to their business; and is not this a "common, every-day matter"? Does any man mean to say that he is outside of this circle of thought and interest? Assuredly not, when he stops to consider. Now, let him apply this principle to himself. He says that he has no interest, to serve as a basis for reading, but, the next time he reads his news-

* See *Library Journal*, v. 5, p. 38–40.

paper and finds, for instance, a statement about the proposed Panama ship-canal, let him give his naturally inquiring mind an opportunity to raise these questions: "Where is this isthmus?" "Why is that the best place for the canal?" "What are the present routes of commerce?" "What similar work has been accomplished on another continent?" "What commercial route did that replace?" "What principles of engineering are involved?" "What effects will result as to the physical geography of the country?" To answer these queries, he consults certain works of American and European geography, commercial reports and statistics, travels and voyages around Cape Horn, works on the Suez canal, works on engineering, and on physical geography and geology. Without being aware of it, he has entered on "a course of reading"; and one which is sure of being effective and beneficial, because in his case it has come about so naturally; from an internal interest, rather than by an external process.

But all this, you say, requires a suggestive habit of mind. Well, so it does; but a suggestive habit of mind is something which can be acquired by careful practice. Moreover the lines of thought in any field of research are not perfectly parallel to each other. They are rather like the

interconnecting passages in a mine, so that a reader who has made some beginnings does not advance far "before his researches begin to intersect," to use the felicitous expression of the author of "Friends in council."* To illustrate once more by the ship-canal. The Suez canal may lead some one, as we indicated, to study the commercial routes to the East previous to its completion, and our reader obtains works on the voyages of Vasco da Gama, and the route around the Cape of Good Hope. These lead him to study the early Portuguese settlements in India made in consequence of these voyages, and later the British colonization, resulting in the present Empire of India. This is as far as he goes in this direction at that time, but at some later period, and in connection with the late war in Egypt, perhaps, this same Suez canal chances to give another turn to his thoughts. "How is the canal managed?," he asks himself, and he studies Great Britain's interested ownership.† This leads him to inquire why this is, and he sees the importance of it as a means of communication between England and India. And studying the growth of the British empire in India, he comes again to the

* Helps's "Friends in council," series 1, v. 1, p. 194.
† "Statesman's year-book, 1882." p. 631-33, 638.

circumstances of its settlement. "Ah," he exclaims, "I have been here before. This is familiar ground." And you all know, from your own experience, how, from that point he goes on with increased interest, with what an added delight and appreciation he recognizes point after point with which he had before made acquaintance.

Now this sort of intersection of lines of thought is cumulative. The farther we go, the surer we are of recognizing some familiar event or topic; and, in consequence, our interest, once awakened, will "grow by what it feeds on." One of the principal charms of Macaulay's "Essays" * consists in the extent to which there will be found in them, gathered up in a single essay, lines of thought which have centred in it from a hundred different sources, and which, to a suggestive mind, lead back to these original sources. And so, from the nature of the relations which one topic holds to hundreds of others, this dreaded unfamiliarity, so formidable as an obstacle to reading, when uninvestigated, vanishes when the reader has taken

* Macaulay's latest biographer, while denominating him "one of the least suggestive of writers" (Morison's "Macaulay," p. 44), gives elsewhere in the volume, (p. 58, 68, 105, 143–44), such a characterization of Macaulay's style as is obviously somewhat at variance with that statement.

the first few steps, and plunged in, and it will vanish in no other way.

(4) *Discriminating selection.*—"But is interest always a safe guide?," some careful reader may recollect to inquire. "Is it not a supposable case that one's interest may be awakened in something unworthy, or even injurious?"

To be sure it is, and this leads us to our fourth principle, namely: the necessity for intelligent judgment and conscious selection of the best;—in short, discrimination in reading. There can be no doubt that indiscriminate reading is one of the principal dangers in the use of books. A young man is in search of something to read, but not with the definite, sharply-defined, intelligent search of a well disciplined mind; rather with the loose, undefined, unformulated desire for "something, no matter what."* And well would it be for him if the world contained nothing but what is suitable and beneficial, and what is appropriate to his needs. But this ideal state does not exist, and the man who wanders into the field of literature, at random, blind-folded, so far as any principle of conscious selection is concerned, does so at his own risk; for he is exposed

* This is more fully treated in chapter II., "Correction of aimless reading."

to dangers of several kinds. First, there are technically written works, requiring for their investigation a maturer mind than he possesses at the beginning, and which he should leave until he has mastered the rudimentary principles. Should a reader guided by a definite principle chance to stumble upon these treatises before he was ready to appreciate them, he would probably only be led thereby to put himself on the right track, but an aimless reader would be just as likely to be discouraged in that field altogether. Again, there is the great mass of indifferent, unimportant reading, which constitutes so really large a percentage of the total number of books in existence. This would not be so serious a matter, were it not that the limited time we have in which to read those which actually demand our attention forbids our wasting any time. Lastly, there are the positively vicious and injurious books.

Now, much may be done by public instrumentalities, by the public schools and the public libraries, in setting a reader right; and particularly by parents for their children;* yet, after all, nothing can take the place of the guiding principle, in the mind of the reader, himself.

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* See chapter VI.

He must establish a standard, in the best light he has, and measure by it every book which is offered to his notice. Now what are some of the discriminations to be made? The book must be good, not bad; of permanent rather than temporary value; it must have some definite merit, rather than a negative character or indifferent qualities. Out of several equally good books, he must select that one which, on the whole, has some relation to his individual needs and development. His sense of proportion must enable him to determine how rudimentary a treatise is needed in his case, and how much time he can afford to give each subject and subordinate topic. If it be said that all this requires experience and a trained use of the critical faculty, the reply is, to be sure it does, and the experience must come by repeated exercise. Moreover, the critical faculty is an excellent one to develop, particularly when it is exercised on one's self, and it must be a poor reader who cannot, from time to time, perceive an advance and improvement, in his methods of thinking, of reading, and of judging.

(B) *Method.*—We come now to the other half of the subject, and are ready to consider "right methods of reading." And here we find principles to guide our action, very similar to those

which we have just been considering under the head of "the right books."

(1) *Definiteness.*—For instance, definiteness of purpose is requisite in choosing the book; yet it is no less essential when we use it. To read every book is impracticable; and to read every part of the book we select,—if we have simply the acquiring of information in view,—is not always wise; for we must take up a given book with a definite idea of what we wish to get from it. Let twenty-five persons in a railway car read the same morning paper and lay it down. The probability is that the portions read by these twenty-five persons are not identical, but represent at least twenty different selections. But, we may say, a book is not a newspaper, and its contents may be supposed to possess that permanent value which does not belong to the newspaper. This is entirely true, and yet the principle of definite selection is hardly less applicable to the book if used for reference, than to the newspaper. Again, let a book of reference, such as a dictionary, stand in its place on a book-shelf, in a public library, and be taken down twenty times in a given day, by as many different persons. Is it to be supposed that those twenty persons will turn to precisely the same page? Certainly not. They are much more likely to turn to twenty

different pages. Not every book is a work of alphabetical reference; and yet there are few books of information, few coming under the head of "the literature of knowledge," which do not serve this purpose of consultation and reference for specific objects.

Again it does not follow that, because there are ten thousand separate books in a given room, there are ten thousand works whose material and current of thought are entirely distinct. M. Huet, bishop of Avranches, a French writer of the 17th century,* "thought that if nothing had been said twice, everything that had been written since the creation of the world, (the details of history excepted), might be put into nine or ten folio volumes." Whether this be so or not, (and it must be remembered that since the century in which this statement was written, the number of books published has been increasing at a rate resembling a geometrical progression), nevertheless the fact that there is so formidable a mass of "common material" pervading literature should lead us to economize our time, and to use the "literature of knowledge" in the most practical and definite manner.

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* Quoted by Mathews;—"Hours with men and books," p. 145.

(2) *Systematic methods.*—And this gives us our second principle respecting methods of reading; namely, systematic reading; a scientific adjustment of means to ends. And here we see at the outset, that there is something to be done *for* the reader, by the author and publisher. Every book which is to be used in any sense as a workman uses a tool, needs a title-page, a contents-table, a running head-line or catch-date, and, above all, an alphabetical index. Supposing, however, the book to lack no one of these, the reader turns at once to the title-page, where he finds the author's own statement of what the book essentially is; next to the table of contents, where the skeleton of the book lies extended, and he can judge for himself as to what the book really is and aims to do. The preface and introduction, also, (if they have any good reason for existing,) will indicate the purpose and limitations of the book. Now there remains the body of the book, with its one hundred, or three hundred, or five hundred pages. Here is where the index is of service. Running his eye along that, with the definite topics in his mind concerning which he wishes to interrogate it, the reader can soon see whether the book contains something which he wants, and where in the book it is. It may be that the whole book is an entirely new

field. Or it may be that it gives him just one new fact. And this method enables him to deal with the troublesome "common element" as you would with the common factors in an algebraic equation; eliminating them, one by one, until a result is reached which can stand.

Some other useful principles to be borne in mind in getting at the essential contents of books, with the least waste of time and labor, are found in a recent address of Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, before the "Society for the encouragement of studies at home";* and still others in a practically written article on "Professorships of books and reading," in the United States government report on libraries.† It should, however, be added, in this connection, that this economizing of time and material must have been preceded by an adequate basis of mental discipline. The reader must have had a careful, systematic training in reading slowly, deliberately and understandingly, before he can safely advance to rapid reading which is at the same time thorough. "To make haste slowly" is a precept of the highest significance here.‡

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* *Boston Daily Advertiser*, July 25, 1879.

† "Public libraries in the United States of America." 1876. Part 1. p. 240–51.

‡ An address of Mr. A. M. Leonard of Boston, delivered

(3) *Comparative methods.*—Closely connected with this is our third principle, namely;—the comparison of sources and authorities; and studying a subject in its various relations.

Besides contents-table and index, the careful reader will sometimes discover another feature; namely a bibliography, or outline of the literature of the subject. Happily, the number of books is increasing in which this feature is to be found. Some of our readers may not at first sight, perceive its practical utility; but it needs only a moment's reflection to see that its object is to furnish the reader an opportunity of examining the subject in a comparative way; in short, of considering it in its relations. And this is the only safe way in which to treat any subject. For, to use a mathematical image, a truth does not present itself to us as a flat surface, like so many square inches of wall, which you may thoroughly examine without changing your position. Truth is, on the contrary, a

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since the preparation of this lecture, contains a suggestion of great practical value, relating to systematic training in the schools, not only in reading aloud, but in silent reading, and in dicating methods by which the teacher may assure himself that this silent reading is thorough, systematic, and effective. ["Rhode Island Institute of Instruction. Papers and proceedings, 1880," p. 54]

many-sided object, and you do not adequately judge of it unless you have viewed it from its various sides. Or, to change the figure, the truth about a subject is not an absolute point in space; wholly isolated and unconnected. It is rather, to use one of our former illustrations, like a given position in a mine, where several passages meet; and each of these passages connects with half a dozen others, and these with still others. It is not safe, then, to judge of any question apart from its relations; either in political science, where legislation on abstract principles solely has been the source of untold mischief; nor in scientific or historical researches, where the investigator in any given line, needs to take a careful survey of the whole field, before beginning at any one point.

Now to a certain extent the same principles hold good with the lines of reading which you and I may follow out; and one of the most practically useful books published within a few years is a little volume by Mr. Winsor, librarian of Harvard University, designed to facilitate just such research. This "Reader's handbook of the American revolution", as it is entitled, is a volume of more than 300 pages, intended to serve, as the preface states, as "a continuous foot-note to all histories of the American revolution." It

is so constructed that each library may make it, in effect, a catalogue of its own collection, on that period, by writing its own numbers on the margin. This is to be followed by other handbooks, covering other fields of research. To use the words of Mr. Winsor's preface; "The special student will find here his starting-point. The ordinary reader can survey the field, and follow as many paths as he likes." "The line of one's reading", he says again, is best pursued, "as sciences are most satisfactorily pursued, in a comparative way. The reciprocal influences, the broadening effect, the quickened interest, arising from a comparison of sources and authorities, I hold to be marked benefits from such a habit of reading."*

Something perhaps needs to be added as to the use which is to be made of such help. Are we to read every book and every chapter thus referred to, and are we to read it all immediately, before taking up anything else? Well, in order to answer these points satisfactorily, suppose that we put in practice some of the principles which we have been settling for ourselves, all the way through this lecture. There could not perhaps

* See also the discussion of reference lists and similar helps, in the chapter on "The specializing of reading for general readers", elsewhere in this book, chapter III.

be a better opportunity to illustrate their specific application.

"Are we to read every one of the selections?" Certainly not, under ordinary circumstances. We are to use our discrimination, and select that which, on the whole, is best for our purpose. "Shall our interest guide us in the selection?" Most certainly it may. A reference to Ruskin's "Sesame and lilies",* for example, in another part of this book, may attract and secure the interested attention of some reader. If so, let him read that, by all means. "Are we to consult these lists with a definite purpose in view?" Certainly. Some one, interested in educational methods, may recognize in the reference to "Professorships of books and reading", the precise thing which he was in search of. Let him then apply the reference to that purpose. "Are we to study our own individual development, and let that shape the selection?" There could not be a better use made of such references. One person may feel that aimlessness is his particular shortcoming, and another that his failing

* Partly in order to put the reader in possession of the wider field of material on this subject of reading, and partly in order to illustrate practically this method of comparative reading and research, a chapter has been added to this volume, giving references to "Books and articles on reading." See chapter VIII.

consists in excessive reading. Let each make his selection with special reference to these points. "Under ordinary circumstances", it was just observed, it is not recommended that one person should go through the whole of a long reference list on a given topic, at one time. In any case it would be better to take up the reading indicated by the various references, not in succession, but with at least one change of subject thrown in, to break the monotony. And in reading what has proceeded from such entirely different minds, and with such varying purposes in view, we cannot too carefully aim to preserve in our minds a just sense of proportion.

(4) *Reading a book as a whole.*—But while we have been discussing these systematic, analytic, and comparative methods of dealing with books, (where it would certainly seem that the chief end of a book was to serve some purpose to a reader, and not at all that readers were created for the books,)—it has, very likely, occurred to some one of you; "Well, what a mechanical way of reading that is! Just imagine going through Shakespeare's 'Merchant of Venice,' or Milton's 'Paradise lost' in this ruthless manner." Yes, and very absurd that would be, unless you were treating them as exercises in language; but, if

you will look more closely, you will see that no such thing has been recommended. It is only in using *sources of information*,—that which is intended for practical use, in short, "the literature of knowledge",—that this method is to be followed. It is our old distinction between "the literature of knowledge" and "the literature of power"; and, as you see at once, the literature of power requires a different treatment. Let us hear Lord Bacon on this point:* "Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested; that is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not curiously; and some few to be read *wholly*, and with diligence and attention." We all know these latter books;—works which have an organic unity of their own, representing a distinct thought; which have a beginning, orderly progression of thought and relation of parts, and necessary conclusion. Such a book is a study in itself, and does not receive full justice at the hands of the reader, if taken up only in a fragmentary way. Such a work represents the growth of a human mind, and it is not adequately approached, except by a sympathetic appreciation

* Bacon's "Essays."—["Of studies."] (Whately's ed.) Boston, 1867, p. 472.

of the circumstances under which it was developed, and the tendencies represented in it.

(5) *Reading to be digested.*—With these distinctions in mind, we may the more intelligently consider, as our fifth principle, the necessity for digesting our reading, and making it a part of ourselves. Certain questions naturally present themselves here. For instance;—"Shall we read by authors or subjects?" Dr. Holmes, in the address already quoted, says: "I believe in reading, in a large proportion, by subjects, rather than by authors;"* and, as you will readily see, this is based on sound reason. Again; "Should the same book be read through more than once?" Edward Everett Hale, in that admirable book, "How to do it," illustrates this by "the slight difference between the two stereoscopic pictures, which gives to them, when one overlies the other, their relief and distinctness."† The "Suggestions" for the pupils of the Providence public schools also embody the same principle: "Life is too short to read many books through but once, but you will occasionally find a book which so impresses you that you wish to go through it a second time. You will be surprised to find, not

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* *Boston Daily Advertiser*, July 25, 1879.

† "How to do it." E. E. Hale. p. 137-38

only how your interest is almost doubled, on the second reading, but how the two views you have obtained of the book, supplementing each other, have served to fix an image of its main ideas in your mind."*

Lord Bacon, again, has an appropriate counsel for us, when he says: "Read not to contradict and confute; . . . but to weigh and consider."† It is obviously on this principle that the study of English composition, in some of our schools,‡ provides for a course of reading parallel with the course of subjects for essays, but separated from it by several months. The pupil comes, in his course, to a given book, which is perhaps illustrative of something which he is to write about, later on; but, not knowing this at the time, he has not the temptation of "reading to contradict and confute." Instead, therefore, of having an impression left in the mind, of the book from one point of view, simply, (a one-sided impression), the reader gains rather a symmetrical view of the book, as a whole; and his own reflection on it in the interval which elapses before using it, cor-

* These "Suggestions" have since been printed in the *Library Journal:* v. 4, p. 447–48.

† Bacon's "Essays."—["Of studies."] (Whately's ed.) p. 472.

‡ Described in *Library Journal*, v. 4, p. 323.

responds to a process of assimilation, and there is frequently as much significance to him in the thought he has himself bestowed upon it, as in that of the original which he read.

Again; "Shall we make notes, in reading?" "A good rule for memory", Mr. Hale says, "is . . . to read with a pencil in hand," and to "write down just a hint of the things you will be apt to like to see again; noting the page where they are."* And, to quote once more from the "Suggestions;" "The very act of writing will" tend "to fix them in your memory, even though you should never look at the memorandum again."† One more question: Is reading, to use the expressive language of Frederick Robertson, to be "an excuse for the mind to lie dormant, whilst thought is poured in, and runs through, a clear stream, over unproductive gravel, on which not even mosses grow?"‡ We know that it is not; the mind should be a live agent, grappling with, and mastering for itself, the various elements in the discussion. "You must think over your book," says a recent writer; "Why should you

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*"How to do it." E. E. Hale. p. 138.

†See *Library Journal*, v. 4, p. 447.

‡"Life and letters of F. W. Robertson," (Am. ed.) v. 2, p. 208.

let the author do all the thinking for you?"* Lord Bacon does indeed say that "some books are to be swallowed," but his counsel in relation to that which deals with the formation of opinions is: "Read not to believe and take for granted."† Once more; "Shall we read much or little?" However we may answer this question (and it is one to which no single, absolute answer, can be given), we shall agree that "excessive" reading, in the true sense of the word, is always to be avoided, and shall not cram our minds with one subject, before properly digesting the previous one.

(6) *Reviewing*.—A sixth principle is that we shall find advantage in reviewing our ground. Whether we are able to "review", (using the word in its technical sense), a particular book, or not, we shall certainly do well to review, in a general way, our course of reading for a given period. Books are an important means of culture, and it becomes us to look well to our progress, and to see that we are advancing in the right direction. Reading is a means of developing the faculties of the mind, and it is well occasionally to look back and see what new powers we have

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* "What shall I read?" New York, 1878. p. 50.
† Bacon's "Essays," (Whately's ed.) p. 472.

gained and what steps we have taken. There is no one of us who cannot look back a year, or two years, as the case may be, and see plainly that there are some of the capabilities and powers of which we are now in possession, which we had not then acquired; there are few of us who cannot trace a gradual growth and development in our thought and belief. It is this continuous development which is the active factor in supplying the experience which comes with years, and which is the only thing that saves many a reader from a perpetual diet of worthless literature.

(7) *Aids.*—As a last point, we may profitably consider the necessity which confronts us all, in view of the limitations, the dangers, and the perplexities of literature, of availing ourselves of all the helps which we can find, and of rendering each other all the assistance possible. If I, by giving you or any one else these hints, shall have succeeded in inspiring any young reader with a genuine interest in literature, I am but rendering a service which is due, and am helping him as I have myself been helped. Now there is one direction in which this help and influence may be extended, which is of preëminent importance;—namely, the class of young readers, the children in our schools,—preëminent because the key to the settlement of the

whole future question of readers and reading lies in training up the race of future readers from early childhood. It is too late to effect any sweeping changes in the reading habits of all adults, but by beginning with the child, when he is forming these habits, at least a strong probability exists of creating an educated reading public in the future. Now, not merely from this consideration, but from the active desire to benefit individual readers and pupils, this matter of the reading of young people has, especially within the last few years, been claiming much of the thought and attention of the managers of our libraries and of our schools. Joint action of these two agencies has in fact been developed, and attended with gratifying success in more than one city and state.* But there is an agency which comes closer to the child, which holds a more intimate relation to him than that of the librarian or the teacher. The parent is the person best able to influence the reading of the children, and librarians will welcome few visitors to the library more heartily than the parents who come to gain assistance respecting the reading of their children.†

* On this point see the papers and discussions in the volume on "Libraries and schools," edited by S. S. Green.

† See the discussion, elsewhere in this volume, on "What

And the function of the library here indicated is not the only point at which it is brought into relation with the thought and life of the public. A public library is coming to be less and less regarded as a vault in which to hoard the treasures of literature, and more as a workshop in which the material of literature may be put to practical application. Between the people, seeking to use this material, and the books which are to be used, stands the librarian, not to discourage research but to encourage it; to cultivate at once the two fields,—his books and his readers;—to see that the books have all the use possible, and that the readers have all the resources possible. And this will be done not merely by bringing the books as a mass to the public as a whole;—it will be by studying the relations of individual books to individual readers. Whenever a book comes into his collection for the first time, a librarian regards it as something which is to have a definite, practical use, in some direction,—to some individual person,—and he exerts himself to ascertain what this relation is. And, as regards individual readers, he is constantly bearing in mind the peculiar tastes and lines of study of

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may be done at home," for more extended treatment of this subject, chapter VI.

different persons, so that, in a given emergency, he can bring the subject to their attention at the right time and in the right way.* It is for this reason that, as a recent writer † has said, "Upon" the library "all questions converge, and from" it "radiate all the lines of research that are to lead to the desired knowledge"; and it is in this way that a library, brought in relation to the life of the whole public, becomes one of the helps of greatest practical service to readers, and one of which every reader should avail himself. Let him consult the library, not merely to find *a* book, but to obtain some specific book; to investigate some definite principle; to gain assistance and suggestions in the matter of reading; to get all the good out of his use of books which he possibly can. And all such interested, earnest, determined readers will find librarians heartily interested to put them on the right track, and to help them to the best results.

Something over four years ago, Mr. Winsor, librarian of Harvard University, wrote:‡ "One of the plans I had in mind while I was in charge of the Boston Library—," was "that of lectures

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* See the suggestions elsewhere in this volume, on "Securing the interest of a community," chapter V.

† *Worcester High School Reporter.* (Sept. 1879.)

‡ *Library Journal*, v. 3, p. 129.

upon books and reading." "We had hoped to interest the sober frequenters of the library by an occasional 'Evening among the books.'" "I thought to have, say, a monthly exposition of the new books, fixing their character and their places in the literature of their subjects." In the same volume of the *Library Journal*,* in which this is printed, you will find a paper by Mr. Axon, of Manchester, England, advocating the desirableness of "library lectures" which "have for their special object the indicating of the books on some specific topic or class of literature." "The object would be, not to save the hearers the trouble of reading, but to show them how to read to the greatest advantage." I am confident that, as the latter writer suggests, "it would not be a difficult task" in some of our cities, "to get men of ripe knowledge to step out from the seclusion of their studies and give to their fellow-citizens advice as to choice of books and courses of reading," who are specially familiar with their several fields.

To recapitulate;—for the plan of this lecture is so essentially practical as to justify this enforcement of the principles;—As to the *material* of our reading, we should make our selection

* *Library Journal*, v. 3, p. 48, 49.

with reference to personal adaptation; to our symmetrical development; to its holding our interest; and with discrimination. And, on the other hand, as to *methods* of reading, we should read with a definite object in view; systematically; with comparison of sources and relations; making a symmetrical study of certain books; digesting and assimilating the material; reviewing the ground at intervals; and availing ourselves of all possible aids. And in the application of these principles, the librarians of this country, it is safe to say, will take great pleasure in assisting any readers to the realization of their plans of self-improvement.

II. CORRECTION OF AIMLESS READING.*

DOUBTLESS one of the chief perils of a beginner in the use of a library, lies in acquiring a habit of aimless and purposeless reading. In the narrow sense, the individual reader himself is responsible for this state of things. For, no matter what benign influences surround him, he has it in his power to thwart them all, and to lead a life of intellectual inactivity. Yet the parent and the teacher should not consider it a light matter that from their hands the child goes out into the world without quickened perceptions, habits of close observation, and an intimate and active interest in the concerns of life.

The librarian also is interested. He naturally wishes to see the best results follow the use of his books. The loss resulting from this aimless reading is twofold. Not only does the reader never make acquaintance with some of the best books, which he would certainly be charmed with on a fair trial, but he fails to appreciate the con-

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* From *Library Journal*, Mar. 31, 1879 (v. 4, p. 78–80).

tents of some which he does read, so listlessly does he make his way through their pages. Between libraries of an equal number of volumes may sometimes be traced a striking difference in value. So between two libraries of nearly equal value can sometimes be traced a noticeable difference in the amount of benefit they produce. In one, the books find appreciative readers and receptive minds; in the other, the same or equally excellent books appeal in vain to the perceptions of their readers.

But these results are not finalities. We are not obliged to conclude that, because personal contact is impossible in every case, all efforts towards amendment are hopeless. For example, let a reader looking for a book of Arctic adventure make his selection from a list prepared on the plan of the admirable History, Biography, and Travel catalogue of the Boston Public Library, with its suggestive notes, illustrations, and references. The annual reports of that library for the years immediately succeeding its publication show how the use of these books was more than quadrupled, and how the use of fiction dropped from 74 per cent of the whole to only 69. In many libraries the inability to obtain a given book, after repeated trials, operates to produce a feeling of indifference, and the reader falls back

into an aimless desire for any book, no matter what. Let the librarian counteract this tendency by adopting some plan of notifying the reader of the return of the book to the library.

If there be any department of reading in which we shall be sure of finding the aimless readers, it is fiction. Mr. Winsor, recognizing this fact, prepared his extraordinarily useful catalogue of Fiction,* which, with its illustrative notes, and constant introduction of the reader to the parallel historical reading, has done excellent work in so many libraries. And if a library be obliged temporarily to allow the public the use of its shelf-lists, a subdivision of the fiction by epochs and localities, and the linking of each story with the historical event it illustrates, is a strong incentive towards carrying one's reading in that direction. This universal taste for fiction is not the only one which may thus be utilized. Novelty is another most attractive feature to the great body of readers, and this fact may be turned to advantage in the bulletin of new books. Mr. Cutter's plan at the Boston Athenæum, now adopted in many other libraries, has great advantages in the suggestiveness of the "brief notes, original or bor-

* The Boston Public Library "Class list for English prose fiction."

rowed, giving an indication of the character of some of the books;" and it has been applied in some libraries to the daily manuscript bulletins, as well as to the printed ones. A principle somewhat akin to this was recognized by Mr. Winsor when he introduced into his quarterly bulletins valuable bibliographies at the end; namely, the principle of referring readers to what the library contains on some subject of current interest, whether the books thus referred to be new or not.*

Readers too often believe that because the great mass of books in a library were not published in the immediate present, they therefore have no present interest. Yet few of the subjects which successively in the course of a year command public attention do not have important light thrown on them somewhere among the contents of a library.

Still another method is the plan of "notes and queries," adopted with so much success in the Boston Athenæum library, and elsewhere. Questions of suggestive interest are here proposed by some one reader, and answered by any other one who may be able to do so; and they frequently

* This matter is treated more at length in the next chapter, "The specializing of reading, for general readers."

open attractive and profitable fields of research. Nor are these all; doubtless there are few librarians who could not name some one means of awakening and directing interest, which has been employed with success. In short, it is plain that, even for some of the most aimless readers, the ordinary methods of the library may be so chosen and employed as to compel an interest where none existed, and to supply a motive where there was absence of motive and aim. A library so conducted, particularly if the librarian be himself fully interested, may have something in its very atmosphere provoking to definite methods of reading.

Allusion has already been made to the impossibility of the librarian personally reaching and influencing each individual reader. After all, nothing is so effective as individual effort, yet, if the librarian be wise, he may delegate his influence to those who can and will reach the mass of his readers. He will find four very potent agents in this work;—the clergy, the press, and the parents and teachers of the school children. All of these are important, but the latter preëminently; and the growing tendency to coöperation between the public library and the public school is emphatically one to be encouraged. Some of the most hearty and efficient help, which every libra-

rian gladly acknowledges, comes from the intelligent interest which some of the teachers take in the reading of their pupils.* This, however, should not be the exception, but the rule. Nowhere (except in the home) can correct habits be more effectively impressed upon a reader, and at no time better than in youth. Too large a part of the adult readers in our public libraries give evidence, by their reading, of a lack of vitality in their mental habits; too many, by their failure to perceive objects and announcements which conspicuously appeal to their notice, show a neglect in the culture of their observing faculties.

Much valuable effort—and none too much—has been directed towards setting books before the people and asking them to read. It is only right that some of this effort should now be directed towards leading them so to read as to make their use of books a source of permanent benefit, and a vital force in their lives.

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* For comprehensive discussion of this matter, see the volume, "Libraries and schools," edited by S. S. Green.

III. THE SPECIALIZING OF READING FOR GENERAL READERS.*

THE general reader." We shall use this common, though somewhat unsatisfactory term, in place of a better one, to designate that large body existing in any community, whose use of a library is not the result of any clearly defined purpose, and whose reading is mainly carried on without any distinctly formulated aim. The public library, indeed, is founded for the benefit of "the general reader"; but it does not by any means follow that the reading done in connection with its books ought to be general, rather than special. If it be true that this large percentage of readers approach it with no higher conception of its use, is not this one of the best of reasons why the contrary result should be brought about, if possible? A part of the work of a public library should be to take the raw material of an aimless reading public, and, by appropriate processes, convert it into an intelligent and discriminating

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* From *Library Journal*, Feb. 1881, v. 6, p. 25-27.

reading public, which knows what it wants, and how to obtain it.*

This, in fact, is the problem which presents itself for consideration in connection with our library work of to-day—a problem whose solution is not without its difficulties, but one which is worthy of our best thought and closest attention. The contrast between these two methods of reading is sharp and suggestive. The reader, for instance, who frequents a special or technical collection is likely to be one the very nature of whose study and reading has developed a most valuable mental discipline. Many a reader, however, in our public libraries does not come to us in search of some particular book, for he is uninfluenced by aims or purposes of any kind. Well, why not apply the reverse process, and let him find—so to speak—that there is some book in search of him? That is, let him find something which will claim his interest, hold his attention, and furnish him with a clue for subsequent systematic reading.

Some methods of accomplishing it.—There is more than one way of accomplishing this, and it is a very interesting study to notice how, by a sort of natural development, the various phases

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* See chapter II., on "Correction of aimless reading."

of this work have presented themselves, and helped to form what may almost be called a complete system. The ordinary methods of library work, for instance, lend themselves readily to any such purpose as this. The publication, by the Boston Public Library, of the special catalogue of "history, biography, and travel," and that of "fiction," with their copious notes, arresting the attention and interest of the reader, became at once effective agencies in leading the public to higher and more instructive fields of reading. The publication of the Quincy catalogue, soon after, was another step in the same direction.

A principle which, if not absolutely new, was somewhat novel in its application, lies at the basis of another series of successful attempts in this direction. Stated briefly, it is this: There is economy of time and labor in the practical work of bringing books to the notice of readers, if your minute cataloguing of a topic can be made contemporaneous with the reader's interest in, and acquaintance with, that topic. And so, when the Boston Public Library, in 1875, began the regular publication of notes on special subjects, at the end of its quarterly *Bulletins*, it was taking an important step in this same direction, and its success depended on this scientific adjustment

of means to ends. Another public library has, from the very outset, applied this principle, not to a quarterly, but to a daily, system of notes on current events and topics, these notes being posted in a conspicuous place in the library, where they are almost sure of catching the reader's eye. "This practice," to quote from an account of it, printed in the *Library Journal*, v. 3, p. 26, "is recommended as serving to break into the aimless habits of reading which characterize many who use public libraries, and to give their reading a definite direction and purpose. Being precisely in the line of what is at the time uppermost in the thoughts of the public, it commends itself to their notice with more than ordinary directness." Out of this practice have been developed several others. For instance, the desire of readers to copy these lists of references led to the introduction of a copying process, whereby a considerable circle of readers may be supplied, and habits of study stimulated. The growth of these habits, in turn, and the gradual increase in the number of readers desiring such copies, led to the printing of some of them. A regular practice is now maintained, of printing twice a week in the daily newspapers such of those references, prepared as "daily notes," which are of the greatest general interest. The next

step was the issue of the serial publication which, under the title of the *Monthly Reference Lists*, prepared by the Librarian of the Providence Public Library, has now been published since Jan., 1881, and has a subscription list of more than 270 names.*

But the librarian is by no means limited to the work of originating and developing an entirely separate line of policy. There are other agencies at work in the same general direction. Now, if each may, by a plan of coöperation, share the benefits of the others' work, the results accomplished will be well-nigh doubled in value and effectiveness. Such an agency as this is the school. Like the library, its tendency and aim are to develop study and research along definite lines. Lying at the basis of all subsequent intellectual development, in the case of most readers, the nature and extent of its influence on the young mind can never be regarded as unimportant. To mention the college after the school is only to pass from the lower to the higher order. With certain necessary modifications, the same conditions are met with, and similar methods may be usefully employed. No one who has

* See 4th annual report of the librarian of the Providence Public Library, p. 8, 9.

carefully studied the recent explanations of methods found useful in college libraries can doubt the serviceableness of such work.

It, perhaps, occurs to some one that, in reaching this point,—the assistance rendered to college students,—we are wandering from the original question—that of reaching the "general reader." What are our communities as a whole, however, but bodies of readers composed almost wholly of persons who have had a more or less extended course of training and instruction, which has been carried, in some cases, no farther than the grammar school, in some cases as far as the college? And how does it happen that, in so many instances, young men and young women, in graduating from high school or college, seem to graduate at the same time from anything like systematic application to study or instructive reading, and only help to swell the already too crowded ranks of the "general readers"? It was the recognition of this very serious evil—which might well be compared to the unravelling of the student's mental training—which led to the organization, some nine years ago, of the "Society to Encourage Studies at Home." This society, as is well known, has confined its invaluable assistance and skilful direction to young women; but it doubtless had the effect of suggesting the

formation of a similar organization for young men,—"The Young Men's Society for Home Study," which has likewise been most serviceable in the same line of work. Other organizations also, such as the "Chautauqua" association, the Woman's Education Association, etc., have a similar purpose. Now, if libraries will obtain from these, and similar societies, the circulars and reading-lists, marking on their margin the numbers by which to apply for the books in their own collection, they will greatly facilitate the work thus undertaken; and doubtless, by communicating with the individual students who follow these courses of study, and taking pains to see that they are put in the way of obtaining all the resources they need, the libraries may still farther advance this work. There is time only to mention the numerous other channels through which this work of the library may extend itself. There are the debating societies and reading clubs, whose existence in every community the librarian cannot help being aware of, and which may readily be made tributary to the same general principle. There is the continual round of plays, concerts, and lectures, which occupy the mind and absorb the attention of the public. These will, of course, repeatedly serve the purpose of the "daily notes" and (particu-

larly the lectures) the more extended treatment of a special reference list. The old idea of the lecture, let us hope, is in a way to be permanently superseded by the rational view of the matter, so well advocated in *The Nation* a few years ago.* The last few years have witnessed in several of our cities a tendency to establish lecture courses which propose for their aim some definite and specific attempt at instruction and cultivation, for people who are willing to take some pains. In these movements the libraries have found excellent opportunities for coöperating. The truth is, however, that a library is an institution of direct interest and practical service to the whole community. One of its ramifications penetrates into the region of historical research, as carried on by a state or local historical society. Another, into the field occupied by an art museum, or school of design, or technical training school. Through another line, it communicates with the commercial and industrial interests of a community. Nor can it fail to offer to professional studies, whether those of the lawyer, the clergyman, or the physician, abundant means for extending and developing them. And in every such relation, through methods varying, indeed,

* *The Nation*, Nov. 6, 1879.

with the varying conditions, the librarian will find that course preëminently useful which assists and intensifies the tendency toward a definite and specific line of study.

What are the objections?—But are there no difficulties in the way? Are there no objections to be urged? Let us see. It may be objected, for instance, that those who need help, such as is here proposed, will not avail themselves of it, and will fail to appreciate its value; while those who do appreciate it are just the ones who do not need it. As regards the "appreciation" of such work, that is a matter to which the librarian cannot be wholly indifferent; yet his work is, of course, not performed to gain this, but to render the public a service. And, as regards the failure of the public to avail itself of such aids, that is a matter of greater or less magnitude, according as the librarian has set his expectations too high or the reverse. It is possible to be disappointed in any branch of library work, if we look for results which the actual condition of affairs does not warrant. But if not improved as it should be, shall it be withdrawn? On the contrary, it seems altogether more reasonable to stimulate and develop its use.

Another objection suggested is that this is a perversion of the true aim of a library, which is

simply to furnish facilities for consulting the books in its collection. It is true that nothing could be farther from the true aim of a library than the attempt to propagate or inculcate any particular set of doctrines, in theology or in politics. But this is entirely different from a method of conducting the library which will cause the reader to turn his mind in some definite direction, and concentrate his attention on some specific subject. As in a school, the pupil is not to have his ideas on subjects of the day poured into him by the teacher, but to be taught to think for himself; so, in the work of the library, the reader is not to be trained into adopting some one specific opinion, but is to be led to investigate some particular topic for himself. But, above all, let it be some one thing, and not "anything, no matter what."

Still farther, it may be claimed that such assistance as this tends to place the student himself in a false relation to his work; leading him to feel that it has all been done for him, and thus encouraging him in indolent mental habits. It is certain that there are readers and students who would take this view of it. But what sort of a conception of right methods of study must such a student have? He regards that as the end and completion of his work which is in-

tended only as a preparation for it. And, besides, it is proper to inquire whether this class of students will pursue a more beneficial course if such assistance be not furnished. But the testimony of professors and teachers is to the effect that "the lazy student will be lazy still," whether furnished with intelligently devised assistance or not. As regards the students who appreciate the value and true purpose of such aid, however, the testimony is no less decided, and extremely gratifying. For convenience, I quote from some of the Harvard professors cited by Mr. Winsor in his third report, but similar statements reach us from all quarters where such methods are in use. One of these professors says: "It is impossible to overestimate the worth of the bibliographical indications and helps." "There is not one forensic in ten that does not show painstaking study."* Another says: "So far from unfitting the writers for original work, it seems to me that the aid thus given induces the student to examine different authorities, and to weigh them carefully, instead of blindly following some possibly untrustworthy writer, discovered by chance." He adds: "It cannot fail to teach them—what is

* Dr. Peabody, cited in 3d report of the Librarian of Harvard University, p. 9.

generally the last thing learned—the proper use of books."*

The manifest advantages of these methods consist in the opportunities which they furnish of bringing the work of the library into close association with the work, the study, and the thought of the individual reader. To bring particular books to the intelligent attention of particular readers is the principle underlying these experiments in "practical bibliography"; and it is almost certain that in this way the library may effectually identify itself with those "wide, deep currents of popular taste" so impressively pointed out in an address† at the Boston Conference of Librarians in 1879, by Mr. Adams.

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* Professor T. S. Perry, cited in 3d report of the Librarian of Harvard University, p. 10.

† *Library Journal*, v. 4, p. 337.

IV. "CURRENT LITERATURE" AND "STANDARD LITERATURE."*

What is current literature?—Let us start with a clear idea of what we mean by current literature. That which is "current" is of course that which is now "running," or now coming out. It includes therefore the magazines which we read as they appear from month to month. It includes also the books which are constantly making their appearance, as fresh publications. It includes also the newspapers, daily and weekly. Now, as you know very well, this element of freshness, of novelty, of current publication, is an important one as connected with the question of what people are reading; because it is found that wherever books are sold, or lent, or published, the demand for new ones is always a heavy one. And on the other hand, if you have ever examined the matter, you must have found a great body of counsel and argument and proof, going to show that it is not well to spend too much

* Portions of this chapter were originally delivered as familiar lectures to pupils in several Rhode Island schools.

time on this class of reading; and that the literature which the general consent of mankind has approved, and which has stood the test of time, is chiefly worthy of our attention. For instance, the two often quoted rules of Mr. Emerson thus admonish you: (1) "Never read any book that is not a year old;" (2) "Never read any but famed books."

There is certainly great force in these considerations, yet I suppose we shall all be obliged to do more or less of this current reading so long as we live.

Not all current reading is important.—But considerable discrimination is necessary. Every newspaper, for instance, contains a vast amount of material which is of no special service to you, and on this you do not need to bestow much thought. In fact, you need to cultivate a habit of mental classification, so that, (to quote from a recent writer), you will involuntarily dispose of your material as "that which is to be forgotten, that which is to be located for reference, and that which is to be committed to memory." And in selecting the material which you actually "commit to memory", you need to exercise most care. You will at first wish to remember everything, perhaps. But every mind's capacity has its maximum, and anything added over and above that

is not retained. In thus discriminating and selecting, you must be guided not merely by the intrinsic value of the knowledge, but by its relative value to you. A carefully trained sense of proportion will be of great service to you; and in view of the large amount of material, and the limited amount of time, your mind should run through the newspaper with as little waste as possible;—instinctively gathering to itself the items which it needs. A recent writer has very forcibly expressed what I mean by the following illustration: "You have perhaps seen a magnet dragged through some sand in which iron filings had been scattered, and have noticed how involuntarily they ranged themselves along the magnet. This is the way in which your mind should take up what it needs." But, going back for a moment to the habit of "mental classification" of which we were speaking, let us consider for a moment that which is "to be located for reference." I was glad to see how well this lesson had been learned by the pupils of a Massachusetts school, [the Worcester High School], a short time ago, who had adopted as one of their principles in the use of the library: "Qui scit ubi sit scientia habenti est proximus."* A free

* This motto will be recognized as that which most appropri-

translation would be: "Knowing where to find the information is the next thing to having it yourself." To recur to illustrations, how well Mr. Winsor has characterized this method as that of "pigeon-holing your knowledge." Have you ever seen the writing-desk of a lawyer who is required to be familiar with many different cases at the same time? Now he may not be able to tell you, off-hand, every detail of every case, but he can do the next best thing;—he can put his finger on the very pigeon-hole where the information is filed, and produce it for you. Much of your material also you will do well to "pigeon-hole," to use when needed.

How to make it suggestive.—Now, what I am going to do at this time is not to try to persuade you to abandon "current" reading altogether, but to make it, if possible, a means of leading up to and suggesting lines of reading in the field of generally acknowledged and approved literature. And not only that, but to make this a fixed habit. For example, I took up the morning *Journal* some months ago and noticed that Mr. James Russell Lowell had been delivering an address at the dedication of a public library at Worcester,

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ately stands on the title-page of Poole's Index—that indispensable tool hereafter for every reader and student.

in England. What was more natural than to ask myself, "What are the historical associations of Worcester?" "What are its local industries?" "Has it attained pre-eminence in any branch of art or design?" On consulting works of reference I found that the city was besieged by the parliamentary forces in a memorable campaign of the civil wars; that it has a cathedral dating from the year 983; that it is one of the three places where the well-known cathedral festivals are held, which have so notably advanced the development of music in England; that its justly celebrated manufactures of pottery and porcelain date from 1751; and that there have been frequent and very interesting interchanges of official courtesies between this Worcester in old England, and our neighboring city of Worcester, in New England.

This is a habit which is susceptible of cultivation, and may be brought to such a point as to enable a man to find matter for reflection, for thought, for interested attention, in so unpromising a field as a directory, or an advertising manual, or a dictionary. Mr. George Eggleston, as you may have read, was once shut up for a week in a Tennessee farm-house, by stormy weather. In the house were only three books, and of these the one which he found "by all odds the most

promising" was an old copy of Johnson's "Dictionary;" and this he read with interest for five consecutive days. The Latin poet Terence declared: "Homo sum. Nihil humani a me alienum puto;" and if you consider a moment you will see that this principle most fitly applies to our use of the newspaper, for nowhere is there a more comprehensive reflection of all subjects of human concern. Make the trial some day with your morning paper, and see from what unexpected corners of the paper, you find suggestive lines of thought stretching out.

And now, leaving this point for the present, let us examine in detail three of the ways in which this suggestive habit of mind may be made useful. Namely, in connection with GENERAL LITERATURE, with HISTORY, and with POLITICAL SCIENCE. Not by any means that these three are the only ones. But they will best serve our purpose at this time.

GENERAL LITERATURE.—Let us suppose that in your morning paper you find the adjective, "Quixotic." The writer says that "This man has no great following in his Quixotic attempt to involve the American government in his personal difficulties." Quixotic. It is an adjective, but it is spelt with a capital. It must be from some proper name, then, must it not? What is that

proper name? Quixote; Don Quixote. Who was Don Quixote? Supposing you had not known, where would you have looked, to find out? Why would you not have looked in a biographical dictionary? Who wrote the story in which this character is found? In what language? Is this name Spanish? What is the Spanish pronunciation of the name? What word do you use, to express that modification of pronunciation by which a well-known foreign name is pronounced like an English name? In what book do you find the pronunciation of proper names? Can you find anywhere in this book any general or universal principles, underlying the pronunciation in different languages? In what period of Spanish literature does this story belong? What traits underlie the representation of this character of Don Quixote? What is the exact application of this figure of speech in this case? What is the name of this figure of speech? Is the use of figurative language an effective feature in ordinary composition? Well, we will stop here; but you see that that simple adjective has been wonderfully suggestive of interconnected ideas in rhetoric; orthoëpy; linguistic principles; European literature; the use of reference books; and even other fields.

Let us take another instance. A book published several weeks ago has the title, "The peak in Darien." Some book of travel or adventure, you may perhaps think, as you see the advertisement in the morning paper. You obtain the book, and open it. You find that it consists of some seven or eight essays, of which the last one bears the title which the book has also taken, and which seems to be a discussion of ethical questions. This of course disposes of the impression you may have had, that the book was a work of travel. Reading through the essay to see why it is entitled "The peak in Darien," you find that it appears to be based on the idea which underlies one of Keats's sonnets;—that sonnet which closes with the line, "Silent upon a peak in Darien." This then is the significance of the book's title;—a line of poetry. Turning now to the sonnet, to see what its essential idea is, you find that here also the language is highly figurative. The sonnet is entitled "On first looking into Chapman's Homer." Put into homely English prose, the poet declares by this language, that the book here referred to, with its beauties of style, was as complete a revelation, as stupendous a discovery, as when an astronomer discovers a planet, or as when Cortez, "silent", ("with a wild surmise"), "upon a peak in Darien," discov-

ered the Pacific Ocean lying at his feet. But how many different lines of thought this little excursion into Miss Cobbe's book has started for us. We find ourselves reflecting about Cortez and Balboa, and about the early voyages in search of India, and about the later efforts at securing an interoceanic canal. About Homer, and the fascinations of the Iliad and the Odyssey, and about English translators of Homer; and about George Chapman who in 1596 translated the Iliad, and gave English readers their first taste of its marvellous quality. About the English literature of the 16th century, and the strange attractiveness that Chapman's language even now has to our ears. About John Keats and his steadily advancing position in the English literature of this century; about the ethical quality of his poetry, and that subtle element in it,—not to be analyzed or described—which suggests now Milton and now Wordsworth. About the wonderful expressiveness of poetry in general, to represent the higher emotions, which Principal Shairp has recently discussed in his "Aspects of poetry." About Miss Cobbe's essay in this volume, with its notable outlook into spiritual fields of thought, and the place which her writings fill in contemporary English discussion. Surely this instance

has proved an exceedingly suggestive one, in the lines of thought indicated by it.

But we must not spend any more time on this first point, LITERATURE. Let us see what we can find under the second head:

HISTORY.—History is something that we read of, is it not? Yes, but history is perhaps just as truly something that you are living in. One of the most difficult things in the world is to realize the significance of the age we are living in; and of the events which are actually occurring around us; the current events, in short. The late Dean Stanley, in an address in this country in 1878, (and referring to the early history of this country), reminded us, in his felicitous manner that "The youth of a nation is its antiquity." And how true this is, yet it requires an effort of mind to see that it is so. How instinctively the child associates venerable appearance and gray hair and advanced age, with those who lived a long time ago,—with the Bible characters, for instance; or the men of the Elizabethan age; or our own revolutionary ancestors, even. But let us stop, for a moment, and ask ourselves how old was Washington at the breaking out of hostilities in 1775? Only 43. How old was Patrick Henry? 39 years. Nathanael Greene was 33. Thomas

Jefferson only 32; John Jay barely 30. James Madison only 24; and Alexander Hamilton only 18. Certainly not a very venerable company. Moreover, if we had lived during those stirring times there would have been no suggestion to us of antiquity;—although this historic period, receding as it does every year farther and farther into the shadowy past, gives us that impression. Our late civil war, though much nearer to us in point of time, is to most of you only a tradition. Yet some events not by any means unimportant have occurred within the time that the oldest of you have been in this school. Within three years no less than three presidents have occupied the executive chair in our own country. One of these left the place by the expiration of his term of office. Another was wantonly murdered while discharging the duties of his office. A third succeeded to this position in the manner appointed by the constitution. Is there nothing of historic interest in this, and in the memorable thrill of sympathy which vibrated round the world when our late president was struck down, when he rallied and sank alternately, for so many days, and finally succumbed? And to all this, you and I were witnesses, in a certain sense. Within these years also the Beaconsfield administration under which Great Britain had been ruled for more

than half a decade has gone out of office, and Lord Beaconsfield himself has died. In Russia the czar has been struck down by an assassin's hand, and, to this day, it is not known to a certainty whether his successor has been crowned, so deeply seated is the revolutionary spirit and movement. Still farther from home more than one war in which the commercial and political interests of Europe as well as the east are involved, has had its origin, run its course, and reached its termination. Nor is this all. You are doubtless aware that the measuring of literary epochs is only roughly represented by a division into centuries. The "eighteenth century" practically closed, so far as its essential spirit is concerned, with the outbreak of the French revolution in 1789. And it is not impossible that you may sometime be able to look back and see that these three years, in which the earthly careers of Carlyle, George Eliot, and Beaconsfield, of Longfellow and Emerson have closed, may almost be said to terminate an epoch in English literature.

Now have we, living in the midst of these things, with our newspapers constantly informing us of them, been able accurately to place them all, and to give each its true historical proportion? That, I fear, is something which even the most assiduous student of history will still fall short

of doing to his complete satisfaction; but certainly we might come a great deal nearer to it than we do. For one thing, let us remember what the late Professor Diman was accustomed to impress upon his classes;—that no event in history is to be conceived of as standing by itself. For instance, there is no such thing as a study of American history, wholly apart from and unconnected with European history. There can be no adequate view formed of the history of even so small a State as our own State of Rhode Island, without taking into account the growth of institutions which had a Germanic origin, which passed through successive processes of development in England, and which on our own continent have had a growth of their own.

Concentrating attention on some specific topic. —But let me here remind you of a consideration which is of great importance. If you glance back over the ground over which we have thus far gone, you notice that everything has been in the direction of what may be called an analytic process;—of taking apart, of separating the topics into their elements; of following out the lines of thought in different, frequently in opposite, directions. Now this is all very well, so far as it goes; yet it needs to be supplemented and followed up by an opposite tendency (which we

may call the synthetic process), if we are ever going to bring our researches to a head; if we are going to accomplish anything of substantial benefit in our mental development. There must, to be sure, be analysis before there is synthesis; but having found what a choice of material we have in these diverging lines of thought, let us see that some of them converge, and that they concentrate somewhere. Sir Arthur Helps has said that a most effective method of historical study is that of "presenting small portions of history, of great interest, thoroughly examined."*

Let us now take one topic which may serve to illustrate the method of using these historical suggestions.

We will suppose that the subject in which your newspaper has interested you is Egypt. You say to yourself: "What has England to do with Egypt anyway?" "How comes an English army to be fighting in Egypt?" By a few such questions as these your interest passes beyond the stage where you simply care to turn over the leaves of the illustrated papers and look at the pictures of the English ships, the troops, and the camps.

* "Friends in council," series 1, vol. 1, p. 194.

You are looking now for the reason of things. You find that Great Britain's colonial policy has been a most vital feature in her development for the last few centuries; that her interests in British India particularly have claimed much of her closest attention and governed much of her foreign policy; that the completion of the Suez canal in 1865 opened a commercial highway to India which it was of the highest importance for her to control, or at least not to have controlled in opposition to her interest; that owing to the fact that France had anticipated her in the control of the canal, negotiations with France became necessary in order to bring about a joint control of Egyptian affairs; that in 1875 Great Britain became the owner of a controlling share in the canal; that in 1878 the European "control" was established, with a separate officer representing the two countries, Great Britain and France;—determined to see that nothing prejudicial to the interests of the two countries was set on foot in Egypt; that a feeling of hostility to the control on the part of the native Egyptians has been developing itself for the past few years, and by a peculiar condition of affairs came to ally itself with the movement headed by Arabi Bey which was primarily a revolt against the Khedive; that the same peculiar condition of

affairs drew Great Britain into taking an active part in actual hostilities; (1) from the desire to protect the lives and persons of her own citizens in Egypt; (2) from the determination to keep the canal open; (3) from her intention to preserve the "European control;" (4) from the extent to which Great Britain had already been committed to this line of foreign policy by the administration of Mr. Gladstone's predecessor, Lord Beaconsfield; (5) from the fact that anarchy existed in the presence of British troops, and the Khedive looked to them to put it down.

Now if you make yourselves thoroughly masters of this one thing, tracing out in the historical works everywhere accessible these lines of study, you can look back on the year 1882 with some satisfaction, and feel that you have "located" and "fixed" one of its historic facts in your mind.

The interconnection of studies and topics.—Let me remind you of another thing. In any series of studies which you are pursuing there is sure to be more or less interlacing and interconnection. It is not easy to draw what may be called "hard and fast lines" in a division of studies. And it is certainly better as it is; for the true way is to interpret the new by the old and the old by the new. The suggestiveness of

contemporary events should serve to call up to your mind those events of past history which throw needed light on them. Conversely, in studying past history, how like a flood of light on the subject comes some practical illustration in the shape of contemporary occurrences. This is well understood by intelligent teachers. Doubtless also you are aware that in the system of "Daily notes" which forms an essential feature of the work of some public libraries, the same principle is recognized.* And I would like to suggest to you that this is a principle which you may very appropriately incorporate into your own mental habits. Suppose that each morning you find your newpaper suggesting to you some subject for study and research. This you endeavor to follow out by consulting reference books and using all possible helps. If you come to the library, very likely you may find that this is the very subject to which references have been made that morning. If not, ask the librarian specially about it, and you will find him interested to run through the train of thought with you. Now you will find that this is a sort of mental discipline which contributes directly to develop that

* See the discussion of "The specializing of reading for general readers," elsewhere in this volume. Chapter III.

suggestive habit of mind of which we have been speaking. Besides that, it tends to develop habits of comparative study and research, and to give you facility in the use of material.

POLITICAL SCIENCE.—Now let us pass to consider the third point, and the first thing which strikes us is its intimate, almost vital connection, with the field of history, which we have just left. Why is this?

Well, let us see whether we can understand it by a reference to natural science. We notice that a tree standing in front of a church is not quite symmetrical; that the branches which grow on the side nearest the building have by no means the full and vigorous development of those which grow on the outer side, This we will call the *observation* of a fact in natural science. The reason for it is that the difference in exposure to the sun, the air and the winds, will make this difference in growth. This we will call a *law* of natural science. To take another illustration. We notice that a covered carriage cannot be driven so rapidly against the wind as before the wind. This is because a partially hollowed opening like this will offer the greatest resistance possible to the current of wind, instead of allowing it to glance off. Here again we have the observation and the law or principle,

Let us look now at historical and political science. We notice that where great stringency exists as to forbidding the publication of seditious articles, as in Russia at the present time, the spirit of sedition is apparently stimulated all the more. This is an historical *observation.* The reason is that exceptional cases of opposition to the existing order of government are found everywhere, from the very nature of things, and that the safest course is to allow them freedom of expression which acts as a safety-valve. This is a political *principle.* Again, we notice that in the south, before the war, the instances were more rare than at the north where the population supported very heartily any such institutions as a public school, or public provision for lighting the streets, or for public distribution of mails. The reason is that the extremely isolated nature of settlements such as there prevailed has not a tendency to encourage public spirit or community of action, but the reverse. Here again we have the observation and the principle; and you will notice that the political or economic principle just as truly explains the historical fact as the natural principle or natural law explains the physical fact.

It is no wonder then that, as a very intelligent writer has said: "History has always been set

down as the especial study for statesmen." And on the other hand, it is easy to see how a knowledge of political laws and principles is of great importance in reading, interpreting, understanding and appreciating the events of history. Hence it is that the study of a particular country's history (as for example, United States history in schools) furnishes one of the most appropriate opportunities for referring to, investigating, and comprehending the political principles which underlie the development of the nation.* And nowhere will your newspaper give you more numerous or more fruitful themes for study and investigation than in this department of political science. A recent writer† has drawn from the figures showing the number of pupils who reach respectively the highest classes in our grammar schools, the high schools, and the colleges, conclusive arguments showing that if we wish to lay the foundations for a generation of carefully instructed and intelligently reflecting citizens in the future, our instruction in political science

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* Mr. Edward A. Freeman's dictum that "History is past politics; that politics are present history," ("Lectures to American audiences," p. 207), will at once occur to the reader. Compare also *Fortnightly Review*, March, 1881, v. 35, p. 320, 328.

† "Instruction in political science in schools below the college"; by Augustine Jones. Providence, 1882.

must begin as low as the grammar schools, for it is only a small percentage that ever goes any higher. It is of the highest importance then to gain an intelligent acquaintance with political principles and their application from day to day by the aid of the suggestive clues furnished by the newspaper.

Different tendencies correcting each other.—And let me remind you of another important consideration in connection with current reading. If it has not already occurred to you, it doubtless will in your college course, which lies just ahead of you, that the different forces and tendencies by which a student is acted on somewhat resemble a complex system of checks and balances, one of which corrects the other. The "course of study" pulls now in this direction, now in that. Opposing forces neutralize each other, and it is the resultant which we call education. Let us take an illustration of this. A tendency of the study of history is to suggest the importance of broad generalizations;—of not confining ourselves to one isolated instance, but of recognizing the abstract principle which underlies the whole. Yet this important truth, (for it is a truth), the untrained mind may be in danger of pressing too closely. Now let the study of natural science come in, with its invaluable discipline; indicat-

ing the danger of too hasty generalizations; and showing the necessity for careful verification of inferences; and warning the student against proceeding with insufficient data. How admirably it serves to correct the tendency just indicated. Take another illustration. The study of rhetoric can hardly fail to impress the young student with the effectiveness in argument of the sharp, emphatic, unhesitating statement of a principle. Yet who can fail to see the importance of following it up by the study of logic, which with its severe analysis shows how exceedingly rare are the instances in which we are justified in using either an "universal affirmative" or an "universal negative"? By this means, the mind is taught to look for the less obvious conditions which attend and limit nearly every assertion, the disregard of which is responsible for most of the unwarranted and unwarrantable dogmatic statements which are current. And so a tendency set at work in the process of our education harmless enough (and indeed positively valuable) within proper limits, but admitting of being unduly emphasized, finds its "corrective" in another tendency, subject also like the first to abuse if pressed too far. Now it is for a similar reason that our reading of newspapers may be made serviceable. If, as is sometimes claimed, the studies of classical liter-

ature and of abstract science, involve a tendency to withdraw the mind from every-day matters, certainly nothing is better adapted to counteract the tendency than an intelligent familiarity with the current news of the day. Let no one forget, however, that if we limit ourselves to the latter influence, we are even more poorly furnished, as regards mental cultivation, than if the former were our sole means of culture.

And if this rapid survey of the different directions in which the suggestiveness of current events may be made serviceable to you, has caused you to see that in these years of school life and school studies you have opportunities for mental culture scarcely inferior to any others in their possibilities for usefulness; and that the "current reading" which constantly falls under your notice is connected by numberless lines of association with the "standard literature" which may furnish you the highest culture, I shall be sincerely glad to have led you to consider these subjects.

V. SECURING THE INTEREST OF A COMMUNITY.*

THIS chapter mainly resolves itself into a consideration of direct and indirect methods. The one attempts only to supply the public with what it wants; the other, striving after the truest improvement of the readers, in time secures, with the growth of intelligent appreciation, an interest even more active, and vastly more permanent, than the other. No library may safely disregard either class of methods, and their proper adjustment is a point which may very profitably engage much of the librarian's attention.

The question of what is wanted.—It is true that the first of these is not likely to escape his attention. "What the public wants" is a consideration which will meet him frequently, from one end of the year to the other. No one needs to be told, for instance, that the public wants to be amused. Doubtless the class of books described as "humorous" would constitute, to a

* From *Library Journal*, Sept.–Oct., 1880, v. 5, p. 245–47.

large body of readers in any one of our cities, the true ideal of a collection of books. The taste for imaginative literature begins early and lasts long, with a large number of readers. "Something new" is a phrase whose attractiveness is not far from universal. Still farther, if it be a question between a "true account," which deals with stirring adventures, and another "true account," whose pages are devoted to an impassive statement of scientific facts, there is not much question which will find the most readers among the general public. "What the public wants," then, as regards the choice of books, while it certainly does not indicate a high degree of enlightenment, has perhaps the merit of being true to nature.

There are certain points of administration, also, in which the interest of the public is concerned. It is in favor of having the library as near its place of residence as possible; and here, unfortunately, "the public" is a plural personage which cannot all be suited at once. It is in favor of that method of obtaining the privileges of the library which requires the least trouble and inconvenience on its part, and sometimes fails to see the need of a careful verification of the applicant's identity. It is in favor of the fewest restrictions on access to the books, and on the time for keeping them. It is in favor, decidedly, of that "charging sys-

tem" which will deliver the book soonest. It is in favor of finding the library open on all days and at all hours, sometimes even not regarding the specified hours announced, it must be confessed. In short, while it is by no means difficult to persuade the public of the reasonableness of a particular restriction, yet its first thought is sometimes largely influenced by selfish considerations.

Nor is the larger part of the public any more fond of bestowing deep and painstaking thought upon the books which it reads, and of carrying the mind systematically through a complicated mental process. It is not improbable even that some readers would be glad of a method of using books which should save them the trouble of any mental process. And, from these readers who are so much averse to any troublesome efforts towards improvement on their own part, it would be scarcely reasonable to look for any very intelligent supervision of the reading of their children, or of the pupils in the schools. Here, again, what the public wants is "the royal road"—some "short and easy method."

That library, then, which would awaken and develop a lively interest among its readers in the miscellaneous public, cannot certainly complain of a lack of methods by which to secure such interest. It may include in its selection of books

a suitable percentage of fiction, and humorous works. It may infuse "new blood" into the library by frequent and regular purchases of the latest publications. It may add largely to the department of voyages and travels, of books copiously illustrated,—of popular literature, in short. It may place its main building in the centre of population, and establish branches for the accommodation of outlying localities. It may recognize the desirableness of "the least red tape" in registering readers, of open book-shelves, of expeditious serving of readers, and long periods of time for the use of the library and the retention of books. It may furnish its readers with explanations and directions for obtaining and using the books, which shall require the least difficulty in understanding and applying them. It may, and it should, recognize the value of all these principles, and the library which fails to act on them does so at its peril. Yet these points do not comprise all that demand attention; and the effectiveness of even these is due to the limits which are set to them. A certain amount of fiction is well enough, but to enlarge this department at the expense of all others would clearly defeat the library's purpose. Diminution of restrictions in the use of books is certainly agreeable to the public, but the removal of all restric-

tions would result in such a loss of books as would soon work its own cure.

The question of serviceableness.—The question, "What does the public want?" is not the only, nor, in fact, the chief question to be borne in mind in conducting a library. One has only to keep his eyes open to see how suggestive as to methods is this other question: "Of what service may the library be?" And it is safe to say that one who has not given the subject attention will be surprised to find at how many points a collection of books, and the thought there contained, touch human life. Here is a machine-shop with its hundred or more workmen, many of whom are anxious to study some mechanical work. The library has such works, and is glad to supply them. Here again is a society of natural history, whose members are systematically studying some department of natural science. To them, also, the library willingly offers its resources in that department. With no less willingness it offers its coöperation to those who are following a course of public lectures on some topic of political science or of art, to a college class studying topically some epoch of history or period of literature; or to a public-school teacher, with a class in geography; or a parent desiring some suitable reading for a child. Or, with no speci-

fied class of persons in view, it seeks to make its collection generally available, by regular references to its resources on matters of current and universal interest.*

Much more effective, however, than the best of such attempts at reaching classes of readers will be the aid rendered to individual readers. Not general and indefinite, but specific and direct assistance, is here given, and, although at first this kind of work might seem to be impracticable in a large library, yet one who tries it will be interested to see how far such individual methods may be introduced. The librarian almost mechanically learns "to pigeon-hole" in his mind the peculiar tastes and lines of reading of single readers, and, when the occasion presents itself, can bring to their notice books and articles which they are glad to obtain. More than one librarian makes it a regular practice, in adding new books to the library, or in collecting material bearing upon some one topic, to drop a postal card to this and that reader who, he knows, will be glad of just this information. The more the conducting of a library can be made an individual matter, bringing particular

* See the discussion of "The specializing of reading for general readers," elsewhere in this volume. Chapter III.

books to the notice of particular readers, the more effective it becomes.

It remains to consider what may be called the "general effect" of such individual efforts, continued from one year to another. They will certainly result in giving the public a large amount of assistance. Being exerted in connection with the whole community, they cannot fail to leave an influence, like the school, the church, or the newspaper,—an influence, moreover, which, if wisely directed, and intelligently shaped, will make the public-library idea appreciably felt in the civilization of the country.

Nor can it fail to have a reflex influence in securing the interest of the public in the library. If methods of the former class were able, by their direct agency, to accomplish practical results, even more significant and more permanent are those reached indirectly by this method. No class of people will be so truly attached to the institution, by active interest, as those who feel that they have been personally aided and improved through its agency. The former methods are directly adapted to secure popularity, the latter to win gratitude; and if it should ever become necessary to choose one of these, at the expense of the other, there can be little room for hesitation. The growth of public sentiment in

communities like Boston and Worcester, where public libraries have been administered on these principles, and with these ends in view, for a series of years, is very instructive. Public sentiment, like confidence, is "a plant of slow growth"; but experience shows that when the conviction has once thoroughly penetrated a community that an institution like this is sincerely aiming to serve the public, a hold on its sympathy and interest has been acquired not easily to be shaken. It should be the aim of each librarian to make the usefulness of his institution so manifest that the public will as soon think of dispensing with the post-office as with the library.

VI. WHAT MAY BE DONE AT HOME.

A FEW WORDS TO PARENTS.

It is well that the public is opening its eyes to the fact that the question of children's reading is one of prime importance. The efforts which have been made to direct and improve it have met with very general approval and commendation. For the school teacher sees in them a means of very effectively supplementing the work of the school. And the librarian regards them as a vital feature of his library work, if that work is to accomplish its best results. And even the general public,—your average "good citizen,"—must be interested in a plan which aims at creating for future years a generation of good readers who as adults will make the best and most intelligent use of libraries, in place of the adult readers of to-day, so large a percentage of whom do not thus use their opportunities.

But what, meanwhile, does the parent of the child think and feel in this matter? Is it nothing to him that society is seeking to improve his child, and thus protect itself? It is something to him. It is much more to him than the aver-

age parent has yet comprehended. For, let it be remembered, efficient and earnest as may be the work of the teacher, and interested and helpful as may be the coöperation of the librarian, there are obvious limitations to their opportunities for usefulness. The librarian, with his multiform and manifold duties and claims upon his time, counts himself fortunate if "once in a while" he can command the time for individual contact with interested young readers, and for advice and suggestions as to their use of books. He feels that in order to make his influence count, he must secure the interest of the three hundred or five hundred teachers, as the case may be, who will, each in their respective positions of influence, extend the same interested supervision. Yes, but when that has been secured, the time of the teacher himself is not unlimited. There is the prescribed curriculum of studies which must be faithfully followed. Again, the school is only one of many influences by which the pupil is acted on at his age. And again, the instances are rare in which one pupil remains under the instruction and direction of the same teacher for a long period of years, and thus enjoys the direct and individual influence which thus only is assured.

It is, therefore, to the parent himself that we

must look for preëminence in this one detail of superior opportunity. It is from the father and the mother that the child receives effective influence and direction; not for a few months merely; not intermittently; not at arm's length; but face to face, hand to hand, continuously, and during that formative period which can almost be said to shape the child's whole future life. We are right then in considering the school and the library as important factors in the direction to be given to the child's reading, and, in fact, to his future thinking and living. But alongside of these, and overshadowing these in opportunities for effective influence, must be placed the home, and what may be there accomplished.

This phase of the library question has hitherto received too little attention; perhaps because the more obvious matters of the school and library first pressed themselves upon public notice; perhaps because of some inherent difficulties in the problem. For it is a double-edged question. There are homes in which the influence which could thus be furnished would be of the most helpful and satisfactory nature. There are also, most unfortunately, homes in which every influence would be only pernicious; home influences which would require the strongest outside influences to counteract them. So far

as regards these latter, there is nothing to do at present but to see that such counteracting influences,—of school, of the library, of society,—are furnished to their utmost extent. Our object now, however, is to protest against the lamentable waste of influence in the former case. In instance after instance, where none but the most cultivated and refined influence exists where the child almost lives in an atmosphere of intelligence, where the home itself might be made a means of culture, where the judicious influence of the father or mother would count or so much, if rightly exerted; this matter of the children's reading is one of the things overlooked and unattended to. It is simply through thoughtlessness that the matter is allowed to go by default.

Some instances that do exist.—Let it not be supposed that no instances exist of the exercise of this influence on the part of parents. Librarians gratefully recognize the fact that, here and there, there are fathers and mothers who make a regular practice of looking out for the reading of their boys and girls, of talking over with them the books which they read, of suggesting others, of coming to the library with them, and looking through the books which interest them, and of asking the librarian for lists of books suit-

able for young readers. Drafts of this kind on a librarian's time he is always glad to meet and he is happy to extend this assistance. This will take time. And unless the parent shall have come to consider his children as his most priceless possessions whose training for the future is of greater importance to him than any other interest, he is perhaps not likely to take this time. We know of households, however, in which there is a "children's hour", looked forward to with eager interest by the children, and with no less interest by the father or mother. The studies and the reading of the day are talked over. The significant features of the topic read and studied are emphasized. Suggestions are given of lines of reading which supplement and illustrate these topics. The parent has the entire confidence of the delighted children, and is in a position to exert an influence which shall be effective, permanent, and in the direction of sound reading. We know of households in which the mother is as much interested in knowing what are the most satisfactory publications for young readers as she could possibly be in anything desired for her own reading. As a consequence, she is the constant and the influential guide of her own children in their fields of reading, and the children want no other.

The children's use of the public library.—It is easy to see that such interest and guidance on the part of parents is a desirable thing, under any circumstances,—even when the books and papers read are from the library of the children's own home. But this is true with redoubled emphasis when the books are from a public library. It is a mistake to suppose that children may be profitably turned loose in the bewildering variety of a public library. The selection of books there gathered does not represent a selection suited to *their* capabilities, *their* taste, or *their* requirements, simply. It is a selection made with a view to the requirements of the whole community. It contains, to be sure, books which they may profitably use, but it also contains books which would frighten them by their severe technicalities, books which would repel them by their dry and abstract discussions; and books which would only confuse them by their peculiar qualities, which nevertheless may make these same books of inestimable value. Interested supervision; intelligent guidance; these should be the conditions attendant on the admission of the young reader to the public library. Let the parent see to it.

We have glanced briefly at the case of those children whose home influences are simply and

positively demoralizing. We have examined with some fulness the case of those whose home influences might be positively beneficial, but where through thoughtlessness the parents neglect to bring these influences to bear in the matter of their children's reading. There remains a third case; namely, that of those children whose parents do not exert a positively demoralizing influence, but who themselves are sadly in need of some positively ennobling impulse in their own reading. Mr. Charles Dudley Warner, in a recent suggestive paper, has thus expressed his view of this matter: "I am seeking one of the reasons why the young who read at all read nothing but trash." "It is because their parents or older persons about them either have not the habit of reading, or they also read trash."* This is not an encouraging view of the matter, but there is evidently some truth in it. Could there be a stronger argument framed to induce these parents to "mend their own ways"? Obviously, they cannot become intelligent guides for their own children until this step is taken.

When the few instances of intelligent and interested help, above cited, shall have become the

* "Hints on home reading," p. 21, 22.

rule, rather than the exception, an impulse will be given to the development of right habits of reading, and to their permanent establishment in the community which will be simply incalculable.

VII. HOW TO USE A LIBRARY.

A RUDIMENTARY CHAPTER.

MR. FREEMAN, in his lectures last winter before the Lowell Institute felt that he must ask to be indulged now in "a dogmatic evening" and a little later in "a controversial evening." And here if we may be permitted, we shall venture to introduce "a rudimentary evening." Few things, at first sight, would seem to be so strikingly elementary as instructions "How to use the library." Yet for all this, it remains true that if the points here considered were universally recognized and acted on, the serviceableness of our libraries would be many times increased.

Why public libraries exist.—Let us come at once to details. Passing by for our present purposes the extended consideration of private libraries, let us ask ourselves why the practice has grown up of collecting volumes together in libraries for the use of the public in general. Why should not each man buy his own books and depend upon these? Each man ought, indeed, to do this,—so far as he finds it practicable; and those who are so fortunate as to be able to do it find inestimable

advantages resulting from their wealth of possession. But consider the actual facts in the case. In any community the number of persons whose means admit of collecting a private library of even a few thousand volumes is painfully small. About fifty per cent of the population are able to own small libraries, averaging perhaps 100 volumes. Almost another fifty per cent rarely make purchases of reading matter beyond a daily newspaper. And the public as a whole has become dependent to a larger extent than we readily realize, on the facilities of the public library; so that it really requires an effort of mind to conceive in what condition we should be left, were these facilities no longer available. Even in the case of those libraries which make an annual charge for the privilege of using the books, the investment is very heavily to the advantage of the reader. Take the case of single volumes in a library like that of the Boston Athenæum. Figure up the amount of intellectual labor, the time spent in the prosecution of researches, and the amount of money expended in publishing the results of the researches; and multiply these by the number of works in those libraries of which these may stand as specimens; and the yearly subscription which entitles one to the use of these treasures becomes insignificant indeed in

comparison. Occasionally, moreover, a library is found,—the Boston Public Library is an instance,—where to all this richness of material is joined absolute freedom as to use. Not even a small fee is charged, but under the proper conditions all is as free as the air.

But leaving these distinguished and preëminent examples, several striking features may be observed in the case of a public library of average size and resources, situated in a community of average taste and means.

(1) The public library contains many works which the ordinary reader would not buy even if his means would permit; namely, books of research in specific departments, not representing his own lines of work or study, but sure to be wanted by him for occasional consultation. (2) The alphabetically arranged "works of reference", (dictionaries, cyclopædias, etc.), which are generally consulted in order to verify some specific statement, and whose accessibility in any community is indispensable. (3) Works of "light literature", (stories and tales), of which the money value is so slight for single copies that few readers think it worth their while to purchase them, but which are read in such numbers by the public that the aggregate cost would foot up to a very large figure. (5) Periodical litera-

ture, embracing many hundreds of issues in the course of a year, with which many readers like to keep themselves very familiar, but for which few care to pay subscriptions, beyond one or two separate publications. (6) Finally add to these the great mass of books which for various considerations of expense and otherwise, are out of the reach of most readers. There are then urgent reasons to justify the existence of public libraries. Without them, some men would have access to no books at all, and others to but few. This deprivation would be a serious injury to the individuals concerned, and indirectly to the community. The principle of community of interests on which the public library is founded brings single readers into the possession of advantages out of all proportion to any pecuniary conditions involved. The public library contains works which the ordinary reader would not purchase but needs to consult. It contains works, on the other hand, of amusement and recreation, for which he is not likely to spend his money.

Libraries not to be used without discrimination and selection.—These considerations are important as affecting the question, what the reader may expect to find in a public library, and this certainly lies at the very threshold of any instructions as to "How to use the library." But this is not

all. Every reader, in availing himself of the resources of a library, needs to remember that while the collection of books there contained is sure to comprise something of interest and value to him, it has by no means been collected solely with reference to his wants. It covers the entire range of wants and preferences in the whole community; and in order that he may derive effectual benefit from it he needs to find what that part of it is which will be useful to him. He needs, in fact, to discriminate. Thus, a library has in its collection works on psychology or on anthropology. It has moreover readers who are in every way fitted to understand and appreciate these books. They would, however, have no meaning to a young child, and such a reader needs to be guided in some way to those books in the library which are specially suited to his comprehension. There is moreover room for choice and discrimination among works written on the same subject. Thus out of the dozen or more histories of the United States, the young child should not be left to stumble upon Dr. von Holst's "Constitutional history", but should have Higginson's excellent little book placed in his hands. But, on the other hand, a reader who has outgrown the more elementary works should not spend his time longer upon them.

He should avail himself of those which are suited to his stage of advancement. Decidedly, also, an adult reader may be supposed to have passed the age when "light literature" ought to claim much of his time and attention. He will find it in the library, it is true, but he will also find those works of literature, science and art which will prove most serviceable to him in the way of discipline and culture. Some books also, especially in a library which receives much in the way of gifts, are likely to be antiquated. It makes all the difference in the world whether a work on chemistry was issued in 1810 or in 1880. Not all new books, moreover, are equally worthy of attention. A very large number of works on the "Life of President Garfield" either have appeared or will appear within a short time; but they are not all valuable. In brief, then, the reader must exercise discrimination, in order not to get a book which is (1) beyond his comprehension, or (2) below his capabilities, or (3) out of date, or (4) of inferior quality.

How to obtain what is wanted.—Obviously the next question is, how to obtain the books which he wants. This is a simple matter in a private library or a small public library; for there the reader can handle the books themselves or receive verbal counsel directly from the librarian.

As the library increases in size both of these become increasingly difficult or even impracticable; and, as a substitute for them, carefully devised systems, (which we might almost designate "library machinery"), have been put in operation in most libraries. These aim to accomplish on a general scale, and for the readers collectively, what the more direct communication would accomplish for the individual reader. Just in proportion, therefore, as the reader comprehends and avails himself of this "machinery" will he secure the best results in the use of the library. Perhaps we may cite the following as the essential features of such a plan: (1) the card-system; (2) the catalogue-system; (3) the system of library service.

(1) *The card-system.*—If the reader may not have direct access to the library shelves, there must be some means of having the book brought to him by the librarian or his assistants. He is therefore supplied with a card ruled not only for dates of issue but for the book-numbers which he selects. If, moreover, as is the case in some libraries, it also contains spaces for the titles of the books, the reader can very readily keep his record of the books read and checked off, and can if he chooses make it a means of reviewing his reading to some purpose.

(2) *The catalogue-system.*—The reader cannot apply for the volumes unless he knows what books there are in the library and what their book-numbers are. A catalogue is needed; and this in most libraries takes the form of (1) a general printed catalogue of the main collection; and (2) supplementary catalogues or lists bringing the information as nearly as possible down to date. But the reader needs, as we have seen, to know more than the mere title and number of the book. In order to exercise the necessary discrimination, he must know whether the book belongs to this class or that; whether it is history or geography or fiction; whether it is recent or out of date; and whether it is the best book for his purpose. In the various forms of catalogues, lists, and other means of supplying information to the readers, these points need to be provided for.

And at the same time they must aim to guide the reader who is in search (1) of a book *by a certain author;* (2) *of a certain title;* (3) added *at a certain recent date;* and (4) relating to *a certain subject.* For the book of recent date the reader will of course consult the bulletin of recent additions; but for the three entries of author, title, and subject, the card-catalogue and in many cases also the printed catalogue, will furnish these in

one and the same alphabetical order. It is unnecessary here to go into the technical details of catalogue-making. It is enough to say that while some catalogues are on the "dictionary" plan, as above indicated, others aim at special advantages by more elaborate classification of entries. To use a "dictionary catalogue", no special training is necessary on the part of the reader. Its beauty consists in its simplicity; for any man who can find the name of "John Smith" in the directory, or the word, "horse-railroad" in Webster's Dictionary, can find in a dictionary-catalogue the three entries for such a book as Ford's "American citizen's manual." Namely, "Ford, W. C.", (author-entry); "American citizen's manual", (title-entry); and "Government", (subject-entry.) The important thing to remember is that all three are in the same alphabetical arrangement, and not in three different ones.

Consulting by subject.—Let it not be inferred however, from what has just been said of the superior simplicity of the dictionary-catalogue that ability to make intelligent use of the more comprehensively classified forms of catalogues is not desirable. Just the reverse of this is true. Undoubtedly the original impulse of most readers in using a library for the first time is to apply for some particular book of which something is

known. That is, the principle on which they consult the library is *by title*, rather than by subject. A step naturally following this is to apply for another book by the same writer. Here the principle is *by author*, rather than by subject. Sometimes, however, repeated unsuccessful applications for a particular book, or a book by a particular author, result in aimless methods of reading. The readers come to the library for "some book—no matter what"; and here the principle of discrimination is wholly wanting. Other distinctions are readily suggested in this connection; for instance, between (1) reading for amusement, and (2) reading for profit or study; and between (1) "light reading" on the one hand, and (2) historical or scientific reading on the other. It is obvious that applying for *a particular book* which is a work of fiction or which is wanted simply as a means of recreation, is essentially a very different thing from applying for *a particular book* which is an authority in science or history, or which is sought as a necessary link in a succession of systematic studies or researches. In the former case the impulse resulting from the use of the book is liable to be simply towards some farther recreation of a similar kind. In the latter case the impulse is rather towards developing and following out the lines of

study and research suggested by the book just read; and as a result the reader will be likely to apply for other works on the same subject or related subjects. Here the principle of consultation is *by subject*, rather than by author or by title; and this is a tendency which it is of the highest importance to encourage and develop, not merely in general, but in the respective cases of individual readers. In many libraries therefore special efforts are made to furnish assistance in this direction. The various works on any one subject are brought together under one head, thus rendering it possible for the reader to study the subject comparatively. But this is not enough. The title-page of a book is frequently very non-committal as to the wealth of material inside; and it is necessary therefore to go behind the title-page, and by the aid of "analytic cataloguing" render available what there is on the various topics to be studied, in pamphlets and reports, and in periodicals and volumes of essays. The reader should make himself familiar with what has thus been prepared for his guidance and he will find himself penetrating into depths of information of which he had not dreamed.

(3) *The system of library service.*—Some of the characteristerics of the catalogue-system which

have just been dwelt upon, are true to a certain extent of the library service. That is to say, the various members of the corps of assistants are instruments for the accomplishment of certain ends, just as the various forms of catalogues, indexes and lists are instruments. In some instances, it is true, one may go farther and say that just as these carefully devised systems of cataloguing accomplish their work as a part of the machinery, neither knowing nor caring about the result, so the librarian's assistants go through their work mechanically, with no vital interest in it. If this be so, so much the worse for them, for the librarian, and for the readers. But just in proportion as they succeed in exchanging a perfunctory view of their work for one of living interest in it, just in that proportion will the possibilities of the library become realities. All of this is true, only with redoubled force, as applied to the librarian himself; and certainly the incongruity of associating the terms, "machinery", or "mechanical", with the librarian, the very head and source of inspiration in this whole matter, ought to be made obvious by the facts in the case.

The reader needs then to remember that behind all the various forms of assistance and guidance which have been indicated, is the librarian

himself, ready to give his personal assistance and guidance when needed. And it is sure to be needed. Where readers are conducting exhaustive investigations of specific subjects in so many different directions, it is manifestly impossible that the most carefully prepared schemes of assistance and reference should cover all the instances where help is needed; and by communicating the subject of the research to the librarian, an opportunity is given of supplying references, with no lack of directness, to this specific subject. A librarian of long experience has remarked that he employs with great reluctance any form of "library machinery, as tending to come between the reader and his personal communication with the librarian." And in any case the systems which we have noticed, though they are in many instances necessary substitutes, are, at the best, substitutes only. In brief then, the fundamental principle may be thus stated: (1) *General guidance* and assistance to readers collectively, on as comprehensive a scale as possible; but (2) *Special assistance* and suggestions personally furnished by the librarian to readers individually whenever the opportunity offers.

The sum of the matter.—Let us recapitulate. (1) The reader should have a correct appreciation of what he may expect to find in the library.

(2) He should exercise due discrimination in applying for the volumes which it contains. (3) He should avail himself to the fullest extent of the systems of guidance and assistance devised for the public in general and of the personal guidance of the librarian wherever practicable. It only remains that he should make the very best use of his opportunities; and the matter of right reading, discussed with some detail elsewhere in this volume, need not be again unfolded in this chapter.*

A series of rules prepared a few years ago for the pupils in the Providence public schools, is given below, and will doubtless be found of service by others than pupils.

How to Use the Public Library.

A series of suggestions for the use of pupils.

Text-books as a basis of reading.—In much of your use of the library you will do well to make your text-books the basis. That is, you will feel an interest in some subject which is touched upon in your lesson, and will wish for more information about it than is found there. Such information you can find in some larger and more complete work in the library, which, perhaps, may be quoted, or in some way referred to in your

* See Chapter I.

text-book. Do not undertake to read all of the works thus referred to, but make yourselves masters of what you do read and consult.

Use of reference books.—Become familiar also with the use of works of reference, particularly such as are arranged in dictionary or alphabetical form. These are not designed to be read through, but to be consulted for information which one part of the volume may contain, independently of all other parts. In the same way, you should form the habit of using maps and atlases, when reading any work which is concerned with the location of places.

Reading for an essay.—In making use of the library for the preparation of an essay, seek for that which will be suggestive. That is, when you come to write, let it be something which you have thought out for yourselves from the statements you consulted, rather than something transferred bodily to your pages, with no mental effort. You will find yourselves just so much stronger mentally, for every effort you make to think for yourselves.

Habits of reading.—Strive to acquire wholesome habits of reading, and to maintain them. Come to the library with a definite book or subject in mind, rather than with an aimless desire for "some book,—no matter what." Concentrate your attention on the subject you are reading about, for it is worse than useless to dawdle through it. Read carefully and thoroughly, so as to be able to digest one subject in your mind before passing to another. Do not form

the habit of returning your books every two or three days. Such a practice, if persisted in, will make your reading a morbid habit, rather than a benefit.

Imaginative literature.—It is not intended that you should be limited, in your reading, to books which simply contain information. It will be well for you to become familiar with the best works of poetry, fiction, and other departments of literature in which the imagination is the chief element. Ask your teacher for suggestions about books of this class. He will be glad to direct you to some work which you will find it a positive benefit to read. Do not forget, however, that, of all the powers of the mind, the imagination is one that is most easily abused, and do not allow this class of reading to claim too much of your time.

Excessive reading.—A proper ambition is commendable, in reading, as in other things, but there is nothing meritorious in the mere act of reading, apart from any good results. Remember that one book, thoroughly digested, is better than twenty, quickly hurried through, and then as quickly forgotten. Nor should your reading interfere with your ordinary school duties, but be made supplementary to them. So, also, it should not interfere with your regular outdoor exercise. Some pupils, certainly, will not need this caution, but it is of great importance that it should be heeded by those who do need it.

Assistance.—While you will gain much in making yourselves independent of assistance, in the simpler matters of study and research, do not hesitate to ask

for help when you really need it. The librarian and his assistants will be very glad to give you help or suggestions on any matter about which you are seeking for information, and you will find them interested to help you.

Reviewing.—It will be well for you occasionally to review your reading for a series of weeks or months, noting down what new ideas you have gained from the books you have read, and noticing whether your advance has been, on the whole, in the right direction. If it has not been, begin at once to correct the error. It will be a useful practice for you to enter in a note-book, from time to time, such facts or memoranda as you consider of special value to you. The very act of writing will tend to fix them in your memory, even though you should never look at the memorandum again. Life is too short to read many books through but once, but you will occasionally find a book which so impresses you that you wish to go through it a second time. You will be surprised to find, not only how your interest is almost doubled, on the second reading, but how the two views you have obtained of the book, supplementing each other, have served to fix an image of its main ideas in your mind.

IN BRIEF, THEN,—

1.—Begin by basing your reading on your school text-books.

2.—Learn the proper use of reference-books.

3.—Use books that you may obtain and express ideas of your own.

4.—Acquire wholesome habits of reading.

5.—Use imaginative literature, but not immoderately.

6.—Do not try to cover too much ground.

7.—Do not hesitate to ask for assistance and suggestions, at the library.

8.—See that you make your reading a definite gain to you, in some direction.

VIII. BOOKS AND ARTICLES ON READING.

In this article we shall aim to point out the various treatises, manuals, articles and essays which bear upon the subject of this book. In other words the reader will find here a series of references to the subject of reading by which he can study it with as much fulness as he desires. And it should be remembered, as has been pointed out elsewhere,* that, because many different persons have written on this subject, it does not necessarily follow that one should read them all; though it does follow that a reader will do well to examine, and see what has been written.

Some of the books on reading. — Among the books which deserve to be read through may be mentioned President Porter's "Books and reading", a new edition of which has appeared within a year. This work is prepared on a very comprehensive plan, giving counsel and suggestions in connection with almost every phase of the sub-

* See pages 28 and 30.

ject, and also mentioning a large number of books by title.

Two other books published within a few years which deserve mention are "The choice of books", by Professor C. F. Richardson; and "Hints for home reading", by Lyman Abbott, Charles Dudley Warner, and others.

The second is what is sometimes called a symposium in which the various sides of the question are presented by different writers. For instance, Mr. Sweetser discusses "What the people read"; Dr. Hamlin discusses "Plans of reading"; Mr. Hale gives suggestions on "The choice of books", *etc.* It should be added that this book has thirty pages devoted to lists of books, with prices added.

This feature of book lists is prominent in "The best reading," edited by F. B. Perkins and others. This book has gone through many editions, of which the latest was issued in 1877, but it has been continued by a "Second series" published in 1882, edited by L. E. Jones. At the end of this book (the edition of 1877), there are about forty pages of suggestions and counsel on reading. The "Readings on readings", at p. 305–18 are quotations from a great variety of authorities.

Several other publications prepared on a similar plan have been published within the last fifty

years,* but no one of them so well meets the case as "The best reading."

Some lectures and addresses.—But aside from these systematically constructed "handbooks" and "lists", some of the most valuable counsel and suggestions on reading have been given in the shape of lectures or addresses. We will mention some of the best. In 1864 John Ruskin delivered two lectures at Manchester, England, which have since been published under the title, "Sesame and lilies." In 1866 Thomas Carlyle, on delivering his inaugural address as rector of the University of Edinburgh, furnished some very suggestive counsel "On the choice of books." In 1877 Dean Stanley delivered an address at Bristol, England, on "The education of afterlife", touching quite fully on "reading as an influence in such education." In 1878 Mr. G. J. Goschen delivered an address on "The culture of the imagination", dealing largely with the question of reading. This was published separately as a pamphlet, but was also reprinted in *Littell's*, v. 141, p. 620–29. In 1878 the late Professor Diman delivered a noteworthy address on reading, at the dedication of the Rogers Free Library, Bristol, R. I., which has been printed. In 1879,

* Some of these are mentioned in the *Library Journal*, v. 5, p. 41.

Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes delivered an admirable address on reading, before the Society to Encourage Studies at Home. [Printed, in part, in the *Boston Daily Advertiser*, July 25, 1879.]* In 1878 Professor William P. Atkinson delivered before the Boston Young Men's Christian Union a remarkably suggestive lecture "On the right use of books." [This is published separately, as is also an earlier lecture by Mr. Atkinson, on "Books and reading", 1860.] A lecture on "The friendship of books", by the late Rev. Frederick Denison Maurice is found in the volume of that title, published in 1880. This admirable volume also contains other noteworthy lectures delivered between 1850 and 1864, on "Books", "Words", "Ancient history", "English history", and "The use and abuse of newspapers." The lecture on "Culture by reading and books", in James Freeman Clarke's excellent volume, "Self-culture," is particularly worthy of attention.

Some things in periodicals.—There are two recent magazine articles of considerable value; "Books and critics", by Mark Pattison, *Fortnightly Review*, Nov., 1877, (reprinted in *Littell's*, v. 135, p. 771–83); "On the choice of books", by Frederic Harrison, *Fortnightly Review*, Apr.,

* See quotations from this address at pages 25 and 32 of this volume.

1879, (reprinted in *Littell's*, v. 141, p. 259–71, and also in *Appleton's Journal*, v. 21, p. 432–43). See also the articles by E. O. Vaile, on "Reading as an intellectual process", *Popular Science Monthly*, Dec., 1875; by Josiah P. Quincy, on "The abuse of reading", *Old and New*, April, 1873, v. 7, p. 445–50; and by "Arthur Penn", (W. M. Griswold) "Notes on reading", *The Century*, May, 1882. For other periodical references, see the new edition of Poole's Index, p. 1085.

Parts of books.—We must not omit to mention also the important material which is to be found published not as separate books, nor as separate articles, but as parts of books.

For instance, the essay on "Books" in Ralph Waldo Emerson's volume, "Society and solitude", is something which no one would wish to overlook. And the older essay of Lord Bacon, which has the title "Of studies", has excellent counsel on the use of books which perhaps has not since been surpassed for soundness. Charles Lamb's "Essays of Elia", contain some "Detached thoughts on books and reading", which are noteworthy. It is here that he makes the remark that "Milton almost requires a solemn service of music to be played before you enter upon him." ("Works", Am. ed., v. 2, p. 191–92.) William Godwin, in "The enquirer", (1797) has an

essay on "Reading." No one who knows the quality of Sir Arthur Helps's writings will wish to lose the essays and discussions on "Reading" and "History" in his "Friends in council", series 1, volume 1. In Hamerton's "Intellectual life" there are two admirable letters on "Reading." Dr. W. E. Channing, in a lecture on "Self-culture", delivered in 1838, has some very appropriate words on reading, ("Works", (1843), v. 2, p. 377–80; ed. of 1875, p. 23–24.) In Smiles's "Character" is a chapter on "The companionship of books"; and in his volume on "Self-help" also are some helpful suggestions, (Am. ed., p. 363–66.) Another excellent book is that by John Stuart Blackie, "On self-culture", which has suggestions as to reading, (p. 9–10, 37–51.) Another helpful book is Munger's "On the threshold", which has a chapter on "Reading." See also the chapters on "Books", in Bishop Clark's volume, "Early discipline and culture", and in many other similar books. In the two little books, "How to do it", and "What career?", Rev. Edward Everett Hale has most happily succeeded in presenting the principles of right reading for young readers. See also "How to read", by "Olive Thorne", (reprinted from *St. Nicholas*.) See also "Self-formation", by Capel Lofft. Also the suggestive remarks of Mr. Ruskin, appended

to his "Elements of drawing", (Am. ed., p. 231–34.) Also the chapter on "Habits of reading", in Professor E. T. Channing's "Lectures on rhetoric and oratory." Professor Henry Reed's "Lectures on English literature" and "Lectures on English history" contain such chapters as "The study of history", "Sunday reading", etc.

The following will also be found interesting: "The art of reading", in "Essays in mosaic", edited by Thomas Ballantyne · and the chapter on "Re-reading a book", in Jacox's "Recreations of a recluse", v. 1, p. 22–46. "Men and books", by Professor Austin Phelps, published within a year, has a title which is misleading without the addition of the sub-title, "Studies in homiletics." The introductory chapter "On the study of history", prefixed to C. K. Adams's "Manual of historical literature", (p. 1–30), deserves and will command very careful attention.

Under the head of fiction reading, there is a somewhat voluminous literature. The indexes to the successive volumes of the *Library Journal* will refer you to much of it; and you will also find many articles and papers referred to in Mr. S. S. Green's paper on "Library aids", read at the Baltimore meeting of the American Library Association, (p. 9–10 of the report as published by the U. S. Bureau of Education, and also

in the *Library Journal*, v. 6, p. 110–11.) An article not there included is the very suggestive one by Professor Justin Winsor, in the *Boston Daily Advertiser*, June 9, 1877, on "Fiction as a starting-point in reading."

Reading of school children.—An almost equally voluminous literature is that on the reading of school children. See under this head also Mr. Green's "Library aids", p. 9, (also in *Library Journal*, v. 6, p. 110); also the volume, "Libraries and schools", edited by Mr. Green, (just published by F. Leypoldt), which includes some of those cited in the "Library aids." Also, nos. 1 and 2 of the "Free public library circular", issued by the state board of education of Rhode Island, (no. 1, "How and what to read", by Rev. Washington Gladden; and no. 2, "Reading in the right direction", by A. F. Blaisdell, M.D.) There are also two recent annual reports of state boards of education containing discussions of this topic, which have been separately reprinted; ("Books and reading for the young", from the annual report of the Indiana superintendent of public instruction, 1880; and "The reading of our boys and girls", from the annual report of the secretary of the Connecticut Board of Education, 1882.) In the *Library Journal*, Sept.–Oct., 1879, it will be remembered, are printed the papers on this topic,

read before the American Library Association in 1879. The little volume prepared by Miss C. M. Hewins; under the title of "Books for the young", and lately published by F. Leypoldt, meets most admirably the demand for carefully selected lists, and contains also valuable and interesting counsel. Other serviceable lists of books for young readers are those published by the Buffalo Young Men's Library and the Brookline Public Library.

Other phases of the subject.—On the relation of public libraries to readers, see Mr. Winsor's paper at the Library Conference in 1876, on "Free libraries and readers", (*Library Journal*, v. 1, p. 63–67.) Also Mr. S. S. Green's paper at the same conference, on "Personal relations between librarians and readers", (*Library Journal*, v. 1, p. 74–81; also published separately.) Also the paper on "Professorships of books and reading", by William Mathews, (United States government report on "Public libraries in the United States", 1876, p. 240–51; also reprinted in Mr. Mathews's "Hours with men and books", p. 136–58.) And that by Mr. F. B. Perkins, on the same subject, (U. S. government report, p. 230–39.) On "library lectures", see the address of Rufus Choate, in 1854, ("Works", v. 1, p. 468–74.) Also an article by W. E. A. Axon, of Manchester, England, in the *Library Journal*, v. 3, p. 47–49, and

a letter by Professor Winsor, in the *Library Journal*, v. 3, p. 120–21.

Literary periodicals.—Not only for suggesting lines of reading, but for indicating suitable books for purchase, the best literary periodicals are of great value. For instance, the regular reading and consulting of such papers as *The Nation*, *The Critic* and *The Literary World*, whose book-reviews are of recognized authority, cannot fail to be serviceable;—provided they are properly used. It is frequently well to see what is said of a book by some critic, after reading it ourselves, but it is also well to have formed our own opinion of the book first, subject to the modification which we find to be necessary from the points made by the critic. But these reviews are nearly always valuable as pointing out those characteristics of a book which will enable us to judge whether we need to read it, or own it. Of similar service, to a certain extent, are some of the cheaper literary papers, such as *Good Literature* and *The Literary News*. The former of these chiefly aims to give suggestive and valuable extracts from the best of the current publications. The latter aims rather at showing readers the quality and value of these current publications by quoting what is said about them as well as extracts from them. Nor will a reader find it

amiss to consult what may be called the "technically literary" publications, such as the *Library Journal, Publishers' Weekly, etc.* Although these are primarily intended for librarians and publishers and booksellers, the information they contain is of importance to any one who is selecting books for purchase or use. What we have thus far mentioned are all American publications. If the reader has time for it, he will certainly do well to extend his reading to the English critical papers of similar scope; *The Athenæum, The Academy, The Spectator*, the English *Literary World*, which as well as its American namesake, is a helpful publication, and others.

The bibliography of reading.—Lastly, the reader cannot afford to overlook the bibliography of his subject. Here, however, we cannot do better than to refer the reader to Sabin's "Bibliography of bibliography"; Power's "Handy book about books;" the list of "Books of reference for libraries", by A. R. Spofford, (in the U. S. government report p. 686–710); the notes under "Bibliography" in Mr. Green's paper on "Aids and guides for readers", (*Library Journal*, July–Aug., 1882, p. 146–47); and particularly to the very comprehensive article, "Bibliographical aids", by F. Leypoldt, in the "American catalogue", pt. 2, (Subjects), p. v–xx. Under the head

of "Indexes" in Mr. Green's "Aids and guides for readers" just referred to, reference is made not only to Poole's Index, but to the numerous indexes to single periodicals recently published, (*Library Journal*, v. 7, p. 139–41.) In the same article is an allusion to the *Monthly Reference Lists* (published by the Providence Public Library), in which the idea of "practical bibliography" has received a very noteworthy development. It is of considerable importance that there should be no misconception as to the proper function of these references and of those in such books as Winsor's "Reader's handbook of the American revolution", Gardiner and Mullinger's "Introduction to the study of English history", and Adams's "Manual of historical literature"; and the necessary limitations and scope of these works are pointed out in an article on "Helps for readers and librarians", (by the writer), in the *Library Journal*, May, 1882, p. 85–86. But since the publication of that article three others have appeared which are sure to be of great service. These are "Historical references", by Professor John T. Short; "The reader's guide to English history", by Professor William F. Allen; and a "Catalogue of historical novels and tales", by H. Courthope Bowen. The characteristics of these three works are well

indicated in the *Literary News*, Oct., 1882, p. 306–7.

In conclusion we will remind the reader that the little volumes, "Books of all time", "A reading diary of modern fiction", and one or two other similar volumes in preparation, contain serviceable hints and suggestions for readers.*

* Among other discussions worthy of notice are the following: "The growth of young people's literature", in the *New England Journal of Education*, v. 17, no. 4 (1883); "The public library and the common schools", by Charles Francis Adams, jr., [1879], reprinted in the volume "Libraries and schools", already referred to; the excellent suggestions on "The use of reference books", by Miss Mary W. Hinman, at pages 45–56 of the Indiana school report, cited on page 124 of this volume; Langford's "Praise of books", a most delightful volume published in English a few years ago; and a volume just issued which is based on a similar plan, "The book-lover's enchiridion", by "Philobiblos." The latter, however, is pronounced by the *Monthly Notes* (of the Library Association of the United Kingdom) "a not uninteresting compilation"; adding: "It is impossible to say much for his sources or his accuracy." There is also a compilation published at Toronto in 1880, entitled "Pleas for books; selections for lovers of books." There is also a very striking and noteworthy address by Col. Homer B. Sprague, delivered at the dedication of the West Brookfield (Mass.) Public Library. See also the forcibly written article by the late Professor William Stanley Jevons, in the *Contemporary Review*, March, 1881, v. 39, p. 385–402, on "The rationale of free public libraries." We should not omit to add that one of the most thoughtful and suggestive considerations of the subject, under such heads as "the newspaper", "the novel", etc., is to be found in President John Bascom's 11th Lowell Institute lecture on "The philosophy of English literature."

INDEX.*

* The names of authors cited in this volume as authorities on reading or some cognate subject, are entered in the following index with nothing following the name. In the case of names cited in other connections, some indication is given of the connection; thus, "Beaconsfield's administration," "Keats, Poetry of," etc.