

"In three days the governor and secretary renew their visit?" observed their fellow-prisoner, thoughtfully.

"They threatened so."

"We must be prepared," said Mr. Austin, firmly.

"Come what will, boy, you shall not fall alone; that I promise you."

He stood meditating awhile, his eyes wandering round the cell, one part of which receded into something like a recess.

"Where do you sleep?" he added.

Our hero pointed to a pallet of straw, and a coarse coverlid in the recess.

"Sleep!" repeated Jack, giving himself an uneasy shake. "Well, I suppose we may say sleep, just for fashion sake."

"I must consult with my companions," said their visitor. "Having once established a communication, it will not be difficult to return. I can raise the stone from beneath. You will understand my signal?"

"Yes."

"To-morrow night, then, I shall return. I dare not absent myself longer now. If my absence takes a friend from you, it at least leaves one with you—hope! Farewell!"

With these words their visitor began to descend. When he had quite disappeared, Oliver and Jack replaced the stone, and scraped the dirt over it again. In a few minutes, everything in the cell resumed its former appearance.

(To be continued.)

John Cassell's Prize Essays on Social Science.

MECHANICS' INSTITUTES.*

ESSAY V.—By JAMES THOMAS, CLOTHIER'S CUTTER, 27, REDMAN-ROW, STEPNEY, To whom was awarded a prize of £3.

ORIGIN OF MECHANICS' INSTITUTIONS.

The inequalities of physical condition, and the misery resulting both to rich and poor, which everywhere meet the eye, have prompted many speculators on society to devise schemes for the equalisation, or the better distribution, of wealth.

Social theories on this subject have been plentiful as blackberries. Proudhon, in France, has argued that all property is robbery, and belongs equally to any and every individual; others have contended that at death all property should revert to the State; and in our own country—in working, practical England—we have had our Harmony Halls, and other ineffectual attempts to exterminate misery and crime, by equalising the physical condition of mankind. And if, as moralists tell us, no effort for good be wholly lost, we ought, perhaps, to consider the British Association as the one solid, practical result of all this socialist doing and endeavouring.

The obvious connection between crime and extreme poverty, at least statistically considered, has given to those theories a reasonable basis of operation; and, however fruitless, candour forces us to admit that they originated in the purest sympathies and the best intentions. Socialism, however, of all possible *isms*, is that which has most specifically been tried and found wanting; and, as a practical system, intended for men generally, it will never more excite either the fears of the rich or the hopes of the poor. It failed, because Nature has so ordered it that all social blessings should be dependent upon individual efforts, knowing that man's sluggishness and love of ease would find its most effectual stimulus in the instinct of self-preservation. It would be easy to show, did our space allow of more than a passing notice, that socialism is opposed to almost every primitive disposition of the mind. Why, for instance, should men have the faculty of looking before and after, if present exertion carried with it no special reward, and laziness no special penalty? It is true the socialist might coerce the lazy and the vicious, but only at the expense of everything that is healthy in individual character, and of all vigour and independence of mind; in fact, it would superinduce many of the forms and feelings of slavery.

It was an effort, nevertheless, to remedy real evils; and the question still remains, how far they are natural and indispensable, and how much, if anything, can be done to prevent them. These views have evidently suggested the British Association,

*From the limited space at our disposal, we cannot undertake to insert, *in extenso*, the whole of the Essays for which prizes have been awarded. We shall, however, omit no new idea or suggestion that is likely to interest our readers, or advance the cause of Social Science. The publication of the Essays in a separate form (now under consideration) will afford an opportunity of printing them in their entirety.

for, with a practicableness truly English, it is anxious to receive any suggestions which may improve man's social condition, without violating the individual and moral necessities of his nature.

CAUSES OF THEIR FAILURE.

On Mechanics' Institutions as one means of social elevation, we are asked, as working men, to detail our experience; pointing out, if we can, where they have failed in the past, and, if possible, to suggest improvements for the future.

The first thought which strikes us is, that Mechanics' Institutes have not hitherto attracted the class for whom they were intended; mechanics generally do not attend them, and we propose to make a few remarks on the causes of this neglect.

In all matters of sympathy between one class and another, and in the social action which results, men are influenced too much by their own tastes, and too little by the peculiar habits and necessities of the class for whom their kindness is intended. The intense horror which the free man has of slavery, and his strong, even painful sympathy for the slave, is not really a true copy of the feeling which the slave has of his own condition. Thus, the promoters of Mechanics' Institutes have studied hitherto, far less what the mechanic really requires than what they themselves wish him to be. They seem to have forgotten that there are many lofty conditions of being, and much profound, elevating knowledge, which the mechanic does not care either to be or to know. Thus it was an useless though well-meant effort, that of providing lectures on the scientific details of certain trades. It was just what Dr. Birkbeck would have liked had he been a mechanic, but it had no attraction for the mechanic at all. The one chief thing which the working man requires, is cheap, innocent, daily amusement; and, in connection with this subject, it cannot be too often remembered that amusement, with or without innocence, he will and must have.

In taking this view, however, we would not be understood as arguing against science, for the writer, though a working man, can truly say, from personal experience, that the purest and most enduring enjoyment, in connection with literature, springs from scientific knowledge. It has not, like works of fiction, the alloy of personal sympathy or passion, but, in its repose and calm strength, seems to ally the mind with the presiding Spirit who rules solar and stellar laws. This strength and peace of mind, however, which springs from scientific acquirements, is not the kind of motive to attract a working man to a Mechanics' Institute.

It will come to him, perhaps, as the chief consoler at the end of his travels; but it is not sufficiently enticing to make him commence the journey.

To the greater proportion of working men we have no hesitation in saying it will never come at all; for it must not be expected that because we want them to join Mechanics' Institutes, that therefore they are all to be literary men. It is enough to know that, in this age of penny magazines and cheap newspapers, a literary vocation of more or less usefulness is possible for any man who will manfully struggle towards it. The majority of men, as of old, will doubtless continue to be hewers of wood and drawers of water; and the present practical question is, how we can best entice them to spend profitably their leisure hours?

EXPEDIENCY OF MAKING RECREATION THEIR PRIMARY OBJECT.

The difficulty which meets us is the same as that which confronts the temperance lecturer—it is not so much to convince men of their folly, as to point out how else they can as agreeably employ their time. This, we are convinced, lies at the root of all remedial measures, and with working men underlies all bad habits whatever.

After the confinement and the labour of the day the body and spirits become more or less exhausted; the beer-shop stands invitingly open, and one or other of his shopmates entices the working man in; his weariness perhaps makes him crave a temporary stimulant, and he enters, and, however destructive it may be, really enjoys his one social hour over the social glass.

This is no fancy picture; it is the way, it is the cause, why tens of thousands of working men so spend their time; and if we would have Mechanics' Institutes to be what they profess to be, we must honestly study the needs of these men, and, as far as possible, provide amusements to counteract the beer-shop.

SUCCESS OF LYCEUMS ESTABLISHED ON THIS PRINCIPLE OF AMUSEMENT.

The Lyceums established in the neighbourhood of Manchester in 1838, were evidently suggested by views like these, and their history is a practical confirmation of their truthfulness. In principle and

object they are identical with Mechanics' Institutions; but in providing each with a gymnasium, and by means of tea-parties, concerts, and soirées, the needs of the working classes were more appropriately consulted.

It is stated also, in the report of the "Manchester District Association of Literary and Scientific Institutions," that "while of the whole number of members belonging to Mechanics' Institutions less than one-half are mechanics, in the Lyceums of Ancoats, Salford, and Chorlton-on-Medlock, they have three thousand members, very nearly the whole of whom belonged to the working classes." In their libraries also they admit works of fiction with less reserve than is usually the case with Mechanics' Institutes.

As early as 1840 the promoters of these institutions established exhibitions of art and science, which were found very attractive, and, by a small charge for admission, obtained a considerable increase to their funds. It has even been thought that the success of these exhibitions suggested the Crystal Palace in Hyde Park, whose permanent establishment at Sydenham will, in its turn, perhaps render in the future such small exhibitions unpayable and unnecessary.

EVIL INFLUENCE OF SECTARIANISM ON MECHANICS' INSTITUTES.

Time was when an essay on this subject, instead of dealing with practical suggestions, must chiefly have combated the prejudices entertained by several classes of men against the spread of knowledge. The aristocracy, at one time, attributed the error and excesses of the French Revolution far more to the license of free thought, and the unchained spirit of knowledge, than to the oppression and vices of their own order, and looked, therefore, upon all methods of instructing the masses with jealousy and fear.

Amongst the religious bodies also, besides ignorant men and the formalists, many otherwise good men attributed the scepticism of Voltaire and the "Encyclopædist" to the same cause.

As the theological prejudices, however, began to give way, religious teachers seem to have thought that, as the spread of knowledge could not be checked, the next best thing was to control its development. Hence, we find, three-fourths of Mechanics' Institutions are at present connected with places of worship. This is the second great cause of their failure.

Let us not be misunderstood. We do not say there is not, or should not, be any connection between knowledge and religion; on the contrary, we think the highest knowledge is religion, and that the highest poetry can only spring from a mind with a deep sense of the Divine attributes. Indeed, what is the true poet but the revealer of the Divine element, both in life and nature? Endowed with a finer perception and sensibility than common men, it is the mission of the poet to explain to mankind the secret harmonies of Nature, and the thousandfold beauties of life!

It is not, therefore, with any sceptical purpose that we attribute the failure of Mechanics' Institutes to their connection with places of worship. The fact is, many religious men have strong prejudices against all works of fiction, and, in most cases where institutions are connected with churches or chapels, the committee are selected from the deacons, or other principal men, and, as a rule, novels of all kinds get excluded from the library.

The present writer, some ten years ago, was the secretary of an institute so circumstanced; and one of the first questions agitated in committee was the kind of books to be admitted into the library. The deacons put their veto at once upon all works of fiction; and in vain was it argued that "The Pilgrim's Progress" and "Paradise Lost" were as fictitious as the "Waverley Novels"—their prejudices were not to be shaken; novels must be, and were, excluded. Need we mention the result? In two years the institute died from neglect!

An elocution class was also established for the study of oratory, and for the recitation of fine passages—a class which, at least, familiarised the mind with the best thoughts of the best men. In practice, however, the deacons thought it approached too near to the forms of the drama. They again interposed; and a loss of several members was the natural result.

We established a discussion class; but it soon appeared that a great many questions could not be discussed at all. Thus, on all hands, we were met with limitations and obstructions, and the institute, as we have said, soon ceased to be.

UNEQUAL DISTRIBUTION OF OFFICES.

The permanency of any institution depends, as is well known, upon the organisation in which it is embalmed; and experience, we think, has sufficiently proved that future success will be greatly ensured by selecting the managing committee from the general body. The present system is neither wise nor just, and will never become popular. For cleverness of

organisation, Wesleyanism will afford us, we think, the best illustration. Its grand secret consists in finding something for every man to do. Gentle and simple are alike welcomed. From the President of the Conference to the humble distributor of tracts, there are many gradations; but there is nothing which absolutely prevents the one becoming the other. It finds a place for every man, and puts every man in his place.

In Mechanics' Institutes we should imitate this feature of Wesleyanism, and, as far as possible, find something for every man to do. At least, we can throw all offices open to the most competent. But, on the present system, the members find that everything of importance is settled by a secret and irresponsible conclave; and the consequence is, they withdraw as fast, or faster, than they join.

WHAT IS ESSENTIAL TO FUTURE SUCCESS.

To avoid these evils in the future, Mechanics' Institutes must be kept separate from all sectarian prejudices, and admit no restrictions but such as are obviously dictated by some well-defined moral law.

In the first place, the library must be well stored with the best class of fictions, and with a good sprinkling of travels and biography. * * * We think every Mechanics' Institute should have a large, well-lighted, and, if possible, handsome reading-room, filled with plenty of newspapers, and most of the periodicals of the day.

It would be better, perhaps, where convenient, to supply the members with coffee—at any rate, a room should be specially set apart for chess and draughts. The game of chess, with its wonderful depth and variety, will call forth every latent disposition and power of the mind. The steady, cautious, and meditative will adopt the king's knight's opening, advancing their game by the slow process of sap and mine; while the more imaginative may revel in the brilliant dangers of the gambit, and win or lose on the chance of a *coup d'état*.

Another means of social union may be found in a monthly *soirée*; it would awaken an interest in each other, and, as a promoter of useful friendship, would keep many a member's name on the books long after the first attractions had ceased to operate.

To all this it may be said, that it is mainly beside the purpose of instruction; to which we answer, we neither hope nor propose to transfer working men into angels; we wish, simply, to make them moral, by connecting them with moral associates, and if not by our ways, at least by their own. We must not hope to make all working men literary men; there will, of course, be some glorious exceptions, but for the constant application and intense mental labour necessary to success in any department of science, he will, as a rule, have neither time nor inclination. His daily labour, furnishing him with subsistence, if not excessive, with health and control over his passions, will still continue to be the chief feature of his life; for, for him there are bright visions of happier days to come. Fancies of coming fame lull him not to slumber, nor tend him when he wakes; but the poetry of his life, his yearning for something higher than the common drudgery of toil, will, with good or bad results, find expression in his leisure hours; and it is for us to decide whether we will try to entice him to better things, or leave him still to go where cozy parlours, bright lights, beer-shop concerts, and other forms of sin are beguiling him away.

French Lessons.

NEW SERIES.—No. XXIX.

CONVERSATIONAL FRENCH.

"TALKING OF conversational French, and of conversation in general," said Dr. Macdonald, "I may mention something highly detrimental to the harmony of all conversation, and that is, 'to carry a joke too far.' I dare say you, like myself, have done this at school; but did you ever learn the French phrase for it?"

"I never did," replied Ernest. "How do our neighbours translate this dangerous practice?"

"They say, '*Pousser trop loin la plaisanterie.*' There are a few other idiomatic phrases connected with joking and jokes, and you ought to be familiar with them; for instance, *Entendre mal la plaisanterie*, 'to take a joke ill'; *n'exercez pas votre plaisanterie sur moi*, 'don't practise your jokes upon me'; *voilà une bonne plaisanterie*, 'that's a good joke'; and, familiarly speaking, you may say, *en voilà une bonne.*"

"I suppose," said Ernest, "that would be equivalent to our phrase, 'that's a good one?'"

"Just so," replied the instructor. "Joking apart" is *plaisanterie à part*, and 'in joke' is *en plaisantant*. Now let us turn from jokes and joking to a word

that English people often misconstrue: I mean 'large.' We apply the word 'large' in so many senses, that we are tempted to be too prodigal of it in French."

IDIOMATIC PHRASES AND SENTENCES.

A large population.	Une population nombreuse.
A large estate.	Des biens considérables.
To deal in a large way.	Paire les choses en grand.
We have a large supply of tea.	Nous avons une grande provision de thé.
A large ox.	Un gros bœuf.
To have a large mouth.	Avoir la bouche grande.
A large head.	La tête grosse.
Large hands.	Les mains fortes.
To be at large.	Etre libre.
To go at large.	Aller où l'on veut.
They allow him to go at large.	On lui laisse sa liberté toute entière.
To discourse on a subject at large.	Entrer dans tous les détails.

"Have the French any word answering to our verb 'to like?'" asked Ernest. "I could never find out any corresponding word except *aimer*, 'to love;' and you know there are things one likes that one is far from loving."

"Your question, Atwood, obliges me to acknowledge a decided deficiency in the French language. It has no exact translation for the verb 'to like;' but the sentences in which it occurs are rendered with tolerable correctness in the following phrases:—

I like her better than her sister.	Je la préfère à sa sœur.
How do you like him?	Comment vous plaît-il?
How does your mother like her new maid?	Votre mère est-elle contente de sa nouvelle femme de chambre?
I like this mutton very much.	Je trouve ce mouton fort bon.
Do you like this book?	Ce livre vous plaît-il?
Do you like his plan?	Approuvez-vous son plan?

BUSINESS LETTERS.

LETTER OF CREDIT.

Liverpool, 8 December, 1859.

In accordance with the arrangement that I have made with your brother in New York, I hereby open for you a credit of £5,000, to be employed in making advances upon consignments to my address. Your drafts upon me at 60 days' sight, payable in London, will be accepted when accompanied by bills of lading, invoices, and timely orders for insurance. The present credit to remain in force for one year, counting from this day; and may be employed many times during this period, but only in such a manner that my acceptances shall never go beyond £5,000 at a time, nor exceed two-thirds of the value of the shipments to which they shall be applied.

I am, dear sir, your friend

and servant,

ARTHUR GRAHAM.

LETRE DE CREDIT.

Liverpool, 8 Décembre, 1859.

Par suite de l'arrangement que j'ai fait avec Monsieur votre frère de New York, je vous accorde par la présente un crédit de £5,000, pour être employé en avances sur consignations à mon adresse. Vos traites sur moi à 60 jours de vue, payables à Londres, seront acceptées sur la remise des connaissements, factures, et ordres d'assurance en temps nécessaire. Le présent crédit doit être en vigueur pendant un an, à compter de ce jour; et pourra être employé plusieurs fois pendant ce temps, mais seulement de manière à ce que mes acceptations ne puissent jamais aller au delà de £5,000 à la fois, ni excéder les deux tiers de la valeur des envois auxquels elles seront applicables.

Je vous salue, monsieur,

avec un bien sincère attachement,

ARTHUR GRAHAM.

THE STORY OF A PICTURE.

It was a gala day in Florence. The time for the annual prize exhibition of pictures had again arrived, and, in conformity to the usual custom, the duke had decreed a holiday for all classes of the people. The streets were filled with the gorgeous equipages of the nobility, and the squares and promenades thronged with gay crowds of richly-habited idlers; while every wine-shop and confectionary bazaar was occupied by a goodly number of the lower classes of both sexes, profusely adorned with ribbons and spangles, and laughing and chatting with unwearied hilarity.

As the day wore on, the steps of all were turned, as if with one consent, towards the Academy—the great point of interest of the day. Here had been collected a large number of the masterpieces of the best artists of the day, besides a host of minor productions from the palettes of young and ambitious painters from every quarter of Italy; and upon these the best critics of the city were to pass judgment, after which, the duke was to publicly bestow upon the successful artist the palm of victory. The paintings had been suspended several days before upon one of the walls of the magnificent gallery of the Academy, but had not been given to public inspection—a thick curtain of dark cloth being hung before them. Before this was now gathered a multitude of the representatives of the beauty, nobility, and wealth of Florence, impatiently waiting for the return of the committee of judges, at which time the name of the successful candidate for the public favour, applause, and envy, was to be announced, and the paintings exhibited to the multitude. A raised seat had been

erected for the duke, and here, surrounded by a brilliant cortège, he was awaiting for the return of the committee, with their award, with as much impatience as the meanest of the increasing crowd around him.

Here, too, were collected groups of artists, of all ranks and stations, to whom this hour was one of pleasurable dread and anxiety. Some of them were well known to fame, and not a few among them had basked in the sunshine of ducal favour and patronage; while others were poor, needy, and unknown, but striving in the hard struggle to raise themselves above mediocrity in their chosen art. And all indifferently, whether renowned or obscure, whether opulent or penniless, had looked forward to this hour with anxiously beating hearts. True, there was but one prize to be gained—and for that, hundreds were striving; yet the gaining of that reward was something that even the most famous of the renowned Florentine painters eagerly desired. To do this, was to reach the very pinnacle of success—to gain that which had been the subject of their dreams from childhood—the golden crown of the master-artist, which was awarded but once in twenty years! Surely, this was an object to be striven for with Spartan perseverance.

Among the younger members of the artistic fraternity present, were two who strolled restlessly around the gallery together, and whose pale and prematurely interlined countenances amply attested the keen disappointment which had thus far attended their career. And yet their history was probably that of a hundred others present—a tale of stern realities and misfortunes which sadly comported with early dreams and hopes.

"We are fools and idiots—thou and I!" one of them bitterly whispered, as they paused in their restless walk. "Poor willings that we are, we have ventured to enter a contest in which are engaged, heart and soul, the best painters of the duke, to say nothing of half a hundred others, far superior to ourselves. What will be the certain result? Defeat, disappointment—perhaps suicide!"

"Thou art right," was the equally gloomy reply. "And yet 'tis hard to give up all these flattering dreams of ours! I have thought to succeed, and raise thee with my success—your thoughts have been as generous—but this is all vanity and folly. If we seek—but look! whom have we here? By the mass, you and I should know that face!"

This exclamation was called forth by the sight of a thin, pale, and poorly-dressed youth, who had been walking nervously to and fro among the crowd, and who had unintentionally brought himself face to face with the two friends. Apparently he recognised them, for his sunken and preternaturally black eyes lighted up with a quick glow; but, as if moved by a sudden thought, he hastily withdrew himself from their sight.

"Stay!" the one who had first spoken exclaimed, pressing after him. "Dost thou not know me and my friend, Pietro Marchena? Are we not from the same village? and did—?"

The youth, however, was now out of sight and hearing; and plucking his companion by the sleeve, the speaker hastily asked—

"You observed him—was he not Pietro?"

"Yes—but he rather looked like Pietro Marchena dead, than him living! Let us find him, and speak with him; I have not laid eyes upon him for the last three years, or since his lovely wife died. Ah, she was truly too beautiful to die! But come—let us follow him."

Before this design could be pursued, however, a loud buzzing of voices, and an instant closing round the ducal chair, announced the entrance of the judges. The foremost of them pressed through the crowd, and, ascending the steps to the platform, presented a roll of vellum to the duke, with a low bow, and the words—"It is our award, your grace."

Unrolling the parchment, the duke cast his eyes over the few lines which were written within it; and simultaneously the roll dropped from his hands, and he exclaimed, in tones of deep surprise—

"How is this, Sir Critic—is it possible that you have passed by the productions of our most valued artists, and given the palm to an unknown name?"

"Such is our award, your grace," was the reply; "and I fear not that an inspection of the paintings would cause your grace to confirm it. The name which we have written upon this parchment, although now unknown, will, I venture to say, henceforth stand foremost in the annals of Italian art."

"Say you so?" the duke eagerly asked. "Then remove those hangings, and let us see with our own eyes."

"The name—the name! what is it?" came in a subdued whisper from the lips of many of the disappointed and envious artists around the ducal chair.