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## LECTURE.

### Miramicki Mechanics' Institute.

#### MR CAIE'S LECTURE.

(CONCLUDED.)

In Britain and the Northern States of the union, the operative classes have risen rapidly during the current century. The military mandate has gone forth.—Lower Ranks take close order, and unless the upper classes march forward a little faster than they have done, this order will be speedily obeyed. Indeed, if moral worth and intelligence be the standards (and they surely are,) by which we are to estimate human character, and rank it high or low, the Mechanics of these Countries, as a class, need not fear a comparison with their more wealthy and independent brethren, any day or hour they choose.

I am aware I may be met here with the argument, that the wealthy classes having greater leisure for mental culture, will be able to maintain an intellectual position much higher than the operative classes. But if there are any present who cherish this belief, they will allow me to remind them of a physiological fact which may have escaped their notice. It is this: *Less time for study, will suffice the operative man.* It is a fundamental law of our nature, that that vigour of body which moderate labour necessarily bestows, never fails to invigorate the faculties of the mind, as well as the muscles of the body of him who labours. The physical and mental faculties of man are so intimately and inseparably associated, (as I showed in a late lecture) that whatever injures or improves the one, injures or improves the other. *Less time, then will suffice for the operative to acquire the same extent of knowledge, as the man of indolent habits; and I, for my part have not a shadow of doubt, but that the wonderful discoveries in arts and sciences of our day, are designed in the hand of Providence, to lessen manual labour, by the gradual substitution of labour-saving-agents. That the heads of men, in a word, are to do the work formerly done by their hands; and that in this way, all classes of men, without distinction, will be provided with ample leisure for mental culture, and moral improvement.*

Numerous and varied are the agents employed, since the days of Professor Anderson and Dr Berbick, to disseminate knowledge—accelerate the progress of science—and improve the social condition of our race. But of all these agents, not one perhaps, has been more successful than that of Mechanics' Institutes. When delivering the opening Lecture at Douglastown and Newcastle, I endeavoured to prove that Mechanics' Institutes were entitled to public countenance and support on the following grounds:—

1st. Because the knowledge they impart is adapted to the comprehension of all classes and conditions of mankind.

2nd. Because this knowledge is a source of pleasure and recreation.

3rd. Because these Institutes, by the information they supply, raise the worldly condition or pecuniary circumstances of operatives and others who belong to them.

4th. Because they aid the progress of the arts and sciences.

5th. Because, by enlightening the lower classes, they raise the intellectual condition of a whole community.

And lastly, because they supply information and amusement for the man anxious for general information, as well as the student of science.

If these six heads had not occupied all the space I could spare for that branch of my subject, I would have added another: it was this. Mechanics' Institutes teach knowledge of a useful and correct kind.

The mere cultivation of the intellectual faculties, while the moral sentiments are allowed to remain dormant or become corrupt, too frequently proves a curse to mankind rather than a blessing. Every ray of light that illumines the understanding should shed its influence over the passions, and the heads and hearts of men, should be equally warmed by that glorious luminary "Knowledge." But is this the case? How important the question. In our day,

my friends, the Tongue, the Pen, the Lecturer, and the Essayist, Books, Pamphlets, Magazines and Newspapers, are all laboring in the fields of knowledge; but to the benevolent mind, the momentous question naturally suggests itself.—What proportion of this mighty mass of information, is really useful? How much of it carries with it a salutary, moral influence; and while it enlightens the understanding, improves also the heart. I fear that a correct answer to this question, would be apt to cast a dark shadow over the picture so often painted of the march of intellect. That too little solid grain would be found in the mighty "bin of chaff." Every body reads now-a-days, but how few reflect; and I fear it is an ominous fact that the more exciting, the more intoxicating the character of any publication, the greater are the number of its purchasers, and the larger the profits of its proprietor.

Since the formation of this Institute in 1846, no less than 120 lectures have been delivered from this platform, by Gentlemen who look for no reward beyond the gratification of assisting to exalt the condition of the community in which they reside.

Yet these Lectures contained not one immoral or objectionable sentence. Is not this a gratifying circumstance? Does it not furnish a strong argument in its favor. The subjects of which these Lectures treated, embraced Literature, and the various branches of Science, and they were happily chosen, and many of them ably handled. Some were distinguished by classic diction, judicious arrangement, and depth of conception; while others were rendered not less interesting or instructive, by their simplicity of style, and happy modes of illustration. Indeed, if allowed to judge, I would say they were (my own excepted) creditable to the taste, industry and talent of their respective authors; but their chief value in my estimation, and that which may render them valuable, when the tongues which gave them utterance shall have ceased to articulate—was their moral tendency, or at least their entire absence from every sentiment of a contrary character.

[Here the Lecturer adverted, in cutting terms, to the fact that during last winter, out of 18 Lectures delivered from this platform, only one was furnished by a Mechanic. This was somewhat strange; but he would remind the audience of something stranger still. Although in his estimation, the Lecture delivered by that Mechanic, was decidedly the most interesting and inviting of the season, yet there were but few mechanics, who thought proper to honor the Lecture with their presence on the occasion of its delivery. Now, I put it to yourselves, said he: Is this fair? Is it manly? I say it is neither fair nor manly. That Lecture must have cost Mr P. much time and labor, but the truth is, it had that great fault which is common to all our Lectures at this Institute. *It was Home Manufactured.* Had it been delivered by a stranger, it would no doubt have been listened to by as crowded an audience as that squeezed into this hall on the memorable occasion, when the French gentleman so electrified us with his new theory of Astronomy or rather natural physiology.—"O tempora! O mores!" exclaimed the Lecturer.]

A Library is a receptacle of intellect.—It is a reservoir formed of many intellectual rills that run into it. But as the quality of every fountain must depend upon the purity of the streams which supply it, so must the quality of every Library depend upon the selection of the books of which it is constituted. Now in the Library of this Institute, there are no less than 407 volumes, access to which, and each course of Lectures, cost little more than a drive to Newcastle, or a dance would do. Yet on these shelves, there is not one objectionable Work, or one whose tendency would be, to exert an immoral influence over the mind of any reader. Are not these gratifying circumstances? Do they not speak strongly in favor of your Institute. For ignorant of the knowledge thus supplied, no man whether poor or rich, need hope to rise high in any station.

Wealth may indeed enable an ignorant man to crawl through life, the creature of flattery, or the victim of ridicule—but

though rich as Rothschild—such a man can never command respect, or enjoy real happiness. Whereas, the heart of the enlightened man—expanded and liberal—is open to the finest impressions, and filled with the most generous feelings and sentiments:—

"The meaneft floweret of the dale,  
The simplest note that swells the gale,  
The common sun—the air—the skies,  
To him are opening Paradise."

Yes my friends—knowledge is not only power—as Bacon has it—but it is pleasure. The Butterfly that gambols amid the flowers of summer. The Lark that rises with the sun, and mounts the azure sky. The insect that dances in zephyr's wings, and the sheep that crops the flowery mead, all enjoy pleasure; but man was constituted to derive happiness from nobler sources than these; he was made to think, as well as to taste, to see, and to smell. The sheep that browses on the "bonny wee daisy," is unconscious of its delicate organization and humble beauty, and the horse that gallops over the garden of roses, does so with a sorrowless heart. Not so with thinking and cultivated man; amid the most lovely scenery, he is the most happy, but his happiness will be just in proportion to the extent of his knowledge, and the degree of his refinement.

Let us picture to ourselves two men, on a fine spring morning ascending together yonder high hill which commands a distinct view of our river, and the surrounding scenery. One is a man of learning and refinement, the other is a man of money, but ignorant and vulgar minded. Having reached the summit of the hill, they looked around, and behold all nature in a cheerful mood, is clothing herself in her summer mantle of green. The sun—fresh and vigorous looking as he was on that morn when at the fiat of his creator he first began to lighten the universe—is coming forth from his chamber in the east; the song of the sailor has superseded the sound of the sleigh bell, and is mingling with the music of birds; a fleet of sprightly ships, after buffeting successfully the ocean billows, are furling their sails; the voyage is ended, and they are about to drop anchor, and ride in safety in our noble river. One of these men, meanwhile, is enraptured, the other is dull and weary.

They now descend the hill; the one in mind, just where he was when he ascended. The other with higher conceptions of himself and the universe of God, of which he forms a part.

During the remainder of the day, the existence of the rich but ignorant man, has been a burthen to himself, and he to society; but the man of knowledge has been deriving pleasure by tracing in his mind the scenery he beheld, and dwelling with delight on the images which his senses had conveyed to his understanding.

It is now evening. The sun is setting, and this ill matched pair are ascending the hill once more. The sun has set.—Twilight pervades the scene. It gets darker and darker. Star after star peeps out. The moon slowly shows her face. The heavens are now clad in their garments of twinkling lights. The two men are again standing on the brow of the hill. How different are their feelings, thoughts, and resolves. The ignorant man is grumbling about the folly of such an excursion at so unreasonable an hour. The man of refinement is gazing at the "Queen of the night," as she reflects her lovely face in the liquid mirror below, and at the stars as they glow in their radiant freshness. He wonders—dreams—adores; his spirit is drawn out—exalted—enobled; all is calm and joyous within him. Existence flows on as sweetly and smoothly as the stream below, without a wind to disturb its waters. The voice of distant music falls on his ear like syrahic songs. The inner man is a concentration of sweet sensations and joyous emotions.

But while the soul of the man of refinement is thus heaving with delight, the man of ignorance and money sees nothing wonderful in the moon, nothing strange in the stars: nothing sweet or soul-stirring in the sound of music. Now, what makes so wonderful a difference between these two men? The one is possessed of a cultivated understanding; the other is an ignoramus. The former, whether poor or

rich, has ever within himself a feast of reason and a flow of soul, of which the latter man knows nothing. That is the difference, and a great difference it is.

To you, the young men then, operatives and others who belong to this Institute, I would say cultivate your minds. Unless you do this you cannot expect to maintain or improve your position in the world. But to some of you, these words, "cultivate your minds," may convey no meaning. You know what cultivating the land means, because you have seen farmers ploughing, sowing, and harrowing in their fields; but perhaps you find it difficult to connect these operations with a something that exists, or ought to exist in your own brains, which you cannot see. The difficulty however, is not so great as might be supposed, and although we cannot see how ploughing, sowing, and weeding are carried on inside the head, yet, we know that they are carried on, for we see their effects.

It is not so much hand work as eye work and ear work. We do not take lumps of any thing in our hands, and mould them into something else. The tools or implements mostly used in the culture of the mind, are eyes and ears; and if these be rightly used, your harvest will not be less certain than it would be from a well-tilled field.

The means for self-improvement are more simple and more within your reach than those of you, who have never thought about the subject could believe. Some of these already exist within you; the others are round about you. They are self-control, diligence and perseverance, reading, study, and conversation. Without the first three, the latter will be of little use for working by fits and starts, whether cultivating a field, or the human faculties, is about as profitable as digging up a newly planted potatoe, day after day, to see how it is getting on.

But some of you may be thinking what is the use of talking about diligence and perseverance to us, who cannot become diligent and persevering, try what we will. Let me ask you, have you ever tried in the right way, or in downright earnest. In what way are Machines set in motion? by power, steam, wind or water. If power cannot be had, will the wheels and crank move? No. But once apply the power and the works keep moving as long as you please. So it is with the mind. There must be impulses or motives, which are to the mind, what steam, wind, or water is to machinery. When these come thoroughly into action, you will not be long in discovering that habits of diligence and perseverance grow out of them, just as naturally as chickens from eggs. Don't expect too much however, don't be impatient, but keep on, go ahead, keep moving. It is better—as the Dutch say—to move only an inch an hour, than not to move at all. It is astonishing what a great deal may be accomplished by perseverance, and you should bear in mind, that every step is so much clear gain and remains as a store to which something else may be added; as with money in a Savings Bank, or a lump of snow which boys turn over till it grows as big as a haystack. Whatever be your disposition or your expectations—keep on, take my advice, persevere and you will conquer in the end. I would gladly tell you, if time would permit, of scores of individuals who have risen to the highest niches in the Temple of Fame just by dint of this diligence and perseverance. Even Sir Isaac Newton, the prince of Philosophers used to say, that he only difference that he knew of that existed between him and the majority of mankind was merely his greater application. (Here the Lecturer related some anecdotes illustrative of this part of his subject, which called forth loud applause and roars of laughter.)

Well, suppose the habit of perseverance to be formed, and to be lying within you, ready like a steam engine to work whenever called upon, it will at once assist all your efforts. The next step is to begin to read, perhaps you may say we have been reading all our lives. This is said by thousands—who take up a book as they would a fiddle—to kill time; but this is not what I mean, when I say, "begin to read." You should read as you take food—to digest it—to make it part of yourself.