

could more easily be induced to stay until the age of sixteen. Young men, it is said, would hate nothing so much as to find themselves inferior in education to the women of their own age and station.

Of late years the improvement of the schools has been so rapid, that objects which were thought Utopian even when Channing began his career, have been realized; and the more sanguine spirits, among whom Mr. Horace Mann, Secretary of the Public Board of Education, stands pre-eminent, continue to set before the eyes of the public an ideal standard so much more elevated, as to make all that has hitherto been accomplished appear as nothing. The taxes self-imposed by the people for educational purposes are still annually on the increase, and the beneficial effects of the system are very perceptible. In all the large towns Lyceums have been established, where courses of lectures are given every winter, and the qualifications of the teachers who deliver them are much higher than formerly. Both the intellectual and social feelings of every class are cultivated by these evening meetings, and it is acknowledged that with the increased taste for reading, cherished by such instruction, habits of greater temperance and order, and higher ideas of comfort, have steadily kept pace.

Eight years ago (1838) Channing observed that "millions, wearied by their day's work, have been chained to the pages of Walter Scott, and have owed some bright evening hours and balmy sleep to his magical creations;" and he pointed out how many of the laboring classes took delight in history and biography, descriptions of nature, in travels and in poetry, as well as graver works. In his Franklin Lecture, addressed, in 1838, to a large body of mechanics and men earning their livelihood "by manual labor," he says, "Books are the true levelers, giving to all who will faithfully use them the society and spiritual presence of the best and greatest of our race; so that an individual may be excluded from what is called good society, and yet not pine for want of intellectual companionship."*

When I asked how it happened that in so populous and rich

* Channing, vol. ii. p. 378.