

Printed Address of the Committee of the York Select Subscription Library

Publication/Creation

Early 19th century

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ADDRESS
OF THE
COMMITTEE
OF THE
YORK SELECT SUBSCRIPTION LIBRARY.

THE provision of a suitable collection of Books, to supply the want which has been created, by the universal diffusion of the art of reading, has long been felt by persons in this city, as an object of great importance to society; and as a debt due from the friends of education to those whom they have endeavoured to instruct, and whose situation in life prevents their having access to respectable libraries already established. Whether it is desirable to encourage a taste for reading in the lower classes of society, is a question which the present occasion does not require us to discuss. The power of reading has been given, and the recent increase of petty libraries, chiefly consisting of works of fiction, is one, amongst many other proofs, that the power will be employed. The question therefore is not, whether we shall encourage a taste for reading, but, whether it is not our duty and our interest to provide the means of its safe indulgence.

The press is undoubtedly one of the most powerful engines of improvement or demoralization: it is a fountain which sends forth equally the waters which contribute to health and strength, and those which debilitate and destroy: and, unfortunately, the worst productions of the press are to be obtained on the easiest terms. A collection of novels, sufficiently large to form the stock of a petty library, may be bought for a very trifling sum. These are let out on terms proportionably reasonable; and, hence, it is greatly to be feared, that much of the benefit which might be derived from universal education, will be counteracted, if some efforts are not seasonably employed to direct the taste which has been given into a safe channel, and to supply its demands, on terms, at least, as reasonable as it can be supplied elsewhere. With this view, and with an aim also to accommodate the middling as well as lower classes, a Society has been formed in York, and a collection of Books provided, to which has been given the name of the *York Select Subscription Library*. It is evident that a collection, consisting chiefly of books directly religious or moral, would attract but few readers, and, consequently, be of little use. Accounts of Voyages and Travels, Biography, History, and the various departments of Natural Science, open a wide field in which curiosity may be safely indulged, and which it is to be hoped may have sufficient attractions to supersede, in great measure, the use of those pernicious and often immoral publications, which now, chiefly, present themselves to the lower class of readers. Whilst therefore the supporters of this institution hope to exclude every thing opposed to christian doctrine and christian practice, they are desirous of opening the door as wide as it can be with safety, to works of an interesting description.

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The number of books of which the collection already consists, is larger than could have been expected at this early period of the institution; an advantage, derived from the proprietors of a library, formed by a few members of the Methodist Society in York for their own use, having made their stock the basis of the present collection. The catalogue will be found to contain a very large proportion of useful and interesting books, entirely unconnected with theological subjects, and the advantage of such a collection with which to commence the institution, will be easily appreciated.

It is not designed that this Society should be a charitable one. Persons may, at present, become proprietors, by a payment of thirty shillings, and an annual subscription of eight shillings. The business is entirely conducted by the proprietors, but any person may have the use of the books by a subscription of twelve shillings for a year; of six shillings and sixpence for half a year; three shillings and sixpence for a quarter; or one shilling and sixpence for a month.

It is presumed that these easy terms will induce many persons, in moderate circumstances, to become proprietors and subscribers, with a view of using the books; but it is hoped that many persons who may themselves have access to more extensive collections, will become members of this Society, with a view of promoting its great object by their subscription, and by taking an active part in the administration of its affairs. Every proprietor may recommend one person, not of ability to subscribe, to read gratis, and those who do not avail themselves of their right of reading, may recommend three poor persons as gratuitous readers at one time, and may also, if they please, have the use themselves of the monthly publications.

When the objects of this Society are duly considered, the Committee feel confident that it cannot be necessary to urge any arguments or persuasions to induce those who are really alive to the best interests of their fellow-creatures, to support it heartily. Every book may be considered in the light of a good or evil companion, and who would not wish, as far as is in his power, to secure from the baneful effects of the latter, those who form the great mass of our population?

*A virtuous "peasantry, a nation's pride
" When once destroyed, can never be supplied."*

The books are placed in a commodious room in *Lady Peckit's Yard*, under the care of a respectable woman as Librarian, who attends from the hours of *eleven* in the morning to *seven* in the evening, where further information respecting the Society may be obtained.

SAM^L. TUKE,
PRESIDENT.

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Persons may, at present, become
subscription of eight shillings. The
may have the use of the books by
three shillings

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