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IN PRAISE OF BOOKS

BY

*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

AND

150 OTHER GREAT AUTHORS

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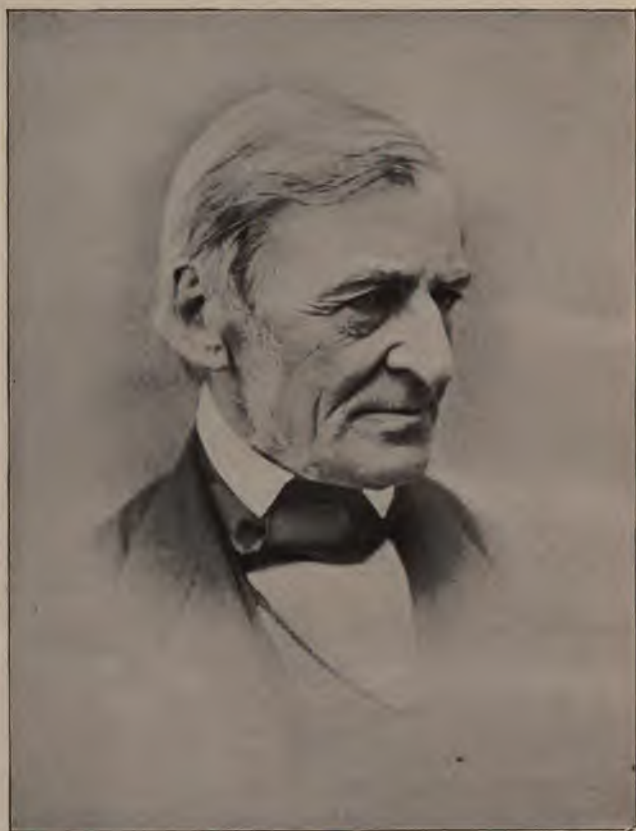
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RALPH WALDO EMERSON,

# THE PERKINS BOOKS

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NEW YORK  
THE PERKINS BOOK COMPANY  
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# IN PRAISE OF BOOKS

A VADE MECUM FOR BOOK-LOVERS

BY

NEARLY ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY GREAT AUTHORS

FROM

SOCRATES TO EMERSON



NEW YORK

THE PERKINS BOOK COMPANY

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## INTRODUCTION.

No people in the world are more ambitious than Americans, yet how many of us do not realize that the surest way to true success is to look beyond our own little world and broaden our lives by judicious reading. The right kind of reading furnishes a liberal and practical education and confers inestimable advantages upon the reader. Even if one reads simply for entertainment, the greatest amount of pleasure may be derived from the world's famous books rather than from inferior books.

“Readers are not aware of the fact,” writes Carlyle, “but a fact it is of daily increasing magnitude, and already of terrible importance to readers, that their first grand necessity in reading is to be vigilantly, conscientiously select.” Ruskin divides all books into two classes, “the books of the hour and the books of all time,” and the great question as Frederick Harrison puts it is this: “What are the books that in our little remnant of reading time it is most vital for us to know?” The answer is in Ralph Waldo Emerson's concise, authoritative essay on “Books,” which we have the pleasure to reprint in full as it originally appeared in “The Atlantic Monthly.” The advice on reading by Sir John Lubbock, one of the greatest literary authorities in the world, is also included.

It is thought eminently fitting to add the sentiments of other great authors “In Praise of Books,” because

many of these were inspired by the same famous books which Emerson and Lubbock recommend. The purpose of this little book is to stimulate book-lovers and provide a guide to the best literature. Blank pages are added at the end for recording book comment, etc.

THE PUBLISHERS.

# IN PRAISE OF BOOKS.

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BY RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

It is easy to accuse books, and bad ones are easily found, and the best are but records, and not the things recorded ; and certainly there is dilettanteism enough, and books that are merely neutral and do nothing for us. In Plato's "Gorgias," Socrates says, "The ship-master walks in a modest garb near the sea, after bringing his passengers from Ægina or from Pontus, not thinking he has done anything extraordinary, and certainly knowing that his passengers are the same, and in no respect better than when he took them on board." So is it with books, for the most part ; they work no redemption in us. The bookseller might certainly know that his customers are in no respect better for the purchase and consumption of his wares. The volume is dear at a dollar, and, after reading to weariness the lettered backs, we leave the shop with a sigh, and learn, as I did, without surprise, of a surly bank-director, that in bank parlors they estimate all stocks of this kind as rubbish.

But it is not less true that there are books which are of that importance in a man's private experience, as to verify for him the fables of Cornelius Agrippa, of Michael Scott, or of the old Orpheus of Thrace ; books



which take rank in our life with parents and lovers and passionate experiences, so medicinal, so stringent, so revolutionary, so authoritative ; books which are the work and the proof of faculties so comprehensive, so nearly equal to the world which they paint, that, though one shuts them with meaner ones, he feels his exclusion from them to accuse his way of living.

Consider what you have in the smallest chosen library. A company of the wisest and wittiest men that could be picked out of all civil countries, in a thousand years, have set in best order the results of their learning and wisdom. The men themselves were hid and inaccessible, solitary, impatient of interruption, fenced by etiquette ; but the thought which they did not uncover to their bosom friend is here written out in transparent words to us, the strangers of another age.

We owe to books those general benefits which come from high intellectual action. Thus, I think, we often owe to them the perception of immortality. They impart sympathetic activity to the moral power. Go with mean people, and you think life is mean. Then read Plutarch, and the world is a proud place, peopled with men of positive quality, with heroes and demigods standing around us who will not let us sleep. Then, they address the imagination ; only poetry inspires poetry. They become the organic culture of the time. College education is the reading of certain books which the common sense of all scholars agrees will represent the science already accumulated. If you know that,—for instance, in geometry, if you have read Euclid and Laplace,—your opinion has some value ; if you do not know these, you are not entitled to give any opinion on the subject. Whenever any skeptic or bigot claims

to be heard on the questions of intellect and morals, we ask if he is familiar with the books of Plato, where all his pert objections have once for all been disposed of. If not, he has no right to our time. Let him go and find himself answered there.

Meantime, the colleges, whilst they provide us with libraries, furnish no professor of books ; and, I think, no chair is so much wanted. In a library we are surrounded by many hundreds of dear friends, but they are imprisoned by an enchanter in these paper and leathern boxes ; and though they know us, and have been waiting two, ten, or twenty centuries for us,—some of them,—and are eager to give us a sign, and unbosom themselves, it is the law of their limbo that they must not speak until spoken to ; and as the enchanter has dressed them like battalions of infantry in coat and jacket of one cut, by the thousand and ten thousand, your chance of hitting on the right one is to be computed by the arithmetical rule of Permutation and Combination,—not a choice out of three caskets, but out of half a million caskets, all alike. But it happens in our experience, that in this lottery there are at least fifty or a hundred blanks to a prize. It seems, then, as if some charitable soul, after losing a great deal of time among the false books, and alighting upon a few true ones which made him happy and wise, would do a right act in naming those which have been bridges or ships to carry him safely over dark morasses and barren oceans, into the heart of sacred cities, into palaces and temples. This would be best done by those great masters of books who from time to time appear,—the Fabricii, the Seldens, Magliabecchis, Scaligers, Mirandolas, Bayles, Johnsons, whose eyes

sweep the whole horizon of learning. But private readers, reading purely for love of the book, would serve us by leaving each the shortest note of what he found.

There are books, and it is practicable to read them, because they are so few. We look over with a sigh the monumental libraries of Paris, of the Vatican, and the British Museum. In the Imperial Library at Paris, it is commonly said, there are six hundred thousand volumes, and nearly as many manuscripts ; and perhaps the number of extant printed books may be as many as these numbers united, or exceeding a million. It is easy to count the number of pages which a diligent man can read in a day, and the number of years which human life in favorable circumstances allows to reading ; and to demonstrate, that, though he should read from dawn till dark, for sixty years, he must die in the first alcoves. But nothing can be more deceptive than this arithmetic, where none but a natural method is really pertinent. I visit occasionally the Cambridge Library, and I can seldom go there without renewing the conviction that the best of it all is already within the four walls of my study at home. The inspection of the catalogue brings me continually back to the few standard writers who are on every private shelf ; and to these it can afford only the most slight and casual additions. The crowds and centuries of books are only commentary and elucidation, echoes and weakeners of these few great voices of Time.

The best rule of reading will be a method from nature, and not a mechanical one of hours and pages. It holds each student to a pursuit of his native aim, instead of a desultory miscellany. Let him read what is proper

to him, and not waste his memory on a crowd of mediocrities. As whole nations have derived their culture from a single book,—as the Bible has been the literature as well as the religion of large portions of Europe,—as Hafiz was the eminent genius of the Persians, Confucius of the Chinese, Cervantes of the Spaniards; so, perhaps, the human mind would be a gainer, if all the secondary writers were lost,—say, in England, all but Shakespeare, Milton, and Bacon, through the profounder study so drawn to those wonderful minds. With this pilot of his own genius, let the student read one, or let him read many, he will read advantageously. Dr. Johnson said, “ Whilst you stand deliberating which book your son shall read first, another boy has read both : read anything five hours a day, and you will soon be learned.”

Nature is much our friend in this matter. Nature is always clarifying her water and her wine. No filtration can be so perfect. She does the same thing by books as by her gases and plants. There is always a selection in writers, and then a selection from the selection. In the first place, all books that get fairly into the vital air of the world were written by the successful class, by the affirming and advancing class, who utter what tens of thousands feel, though they cannot say. There has already been a scrutiny and choice from many hundreds of young pens, before the pamphlet or political chapter which you read in a fugitive journal comes to your eye. All these are young adventurers, who produce their performance to the wise ear of Time, who sits and weighs, and ten years hence out of a million of pages reprints one. Again it is judged, it is winnowed by all the winds of opinion, and what

terrific selection has not passed on it, before it can be reprinted after twenty years, and reprinted after a century !—it is as if Minos and Rhadamanthus had indorsed the writing. 'Tis therefore an economy of time to read old and famed books. Nothing can be preserved which is not good ; and I know beforehand that Pindar, Martial, Terence, Galen, Kepler, Galileo, Bacon, Erasmus, More, will be superior to the average intellect. In contemporaries, it is not so easy to distinguish betwixt notoriety and fame.

Be sure, then, to read no mean books. Shun the spawn of the press on the gossip of the hour. Do not read what you shall learn without asking, in the street and the train. Dr. Johnson said “ he always went into stately shops ” ; and good travelers stop at the best hotels ; for, though they cost more, they do not cost much more, and there is the good company and the best information. In like manner, the scholar knows that the famed books contain, first and last, the best thoughts and facts. Now and then, by rarest luck, in some foolish Grub Street is the gem we want. But in the best circles is the best information. If you should transfer the amount of your reading day by day in the newspaper to the standard authors,—but who dare speak of such a thing ?

The three practical rules, then, which I have to offer, are, 1. Never read any book that is not a year old. 2. Never read any but famed books. 3. Never read any but what you like ; or, in Shakespeare's phrase,

“ No profit goes where is no pleasure ta'en ;  
In brief, Sir, study what you most affect.”

Montaigne says, “ Books are a languid pleasure ” ;

but I find certain books vital and spermatic, not leaving the reader what he was ; he shuts the book a richer man. I would never willingly read any others than such. And I will venture, at the risk of inditing a list of old primers and grammars, to count the few books which a superficial reader must thankfully use.

Of the old Greek books, I think there are five which we cannot spare :—1. Homer, who, in spite of Pope, and all the learned uproar of centuries, has really the true fire, and is good for simple minds, is the true and adequate germ of Greece, and occupies that place as history, which nothing can supply. It holds through all literature, that our best history is still poetry. It is so in Hebrew, in Sanscrit, and in Greek. English history is best known through Shakespeare ; how much through Merlin, Robin Hood, and the Scottish ballads ! the German, through the Nibelungen Lied ; the Spanish, through the Cid. Of Homer, George Chapman's is the heroic translation, though the most literal prose version is the best of all.—2. Herodotus, whose history contains inestimable anecdotes, which brought it with the learned into a sort of disesteem ; but in these days, when it is found that what is most memorable of history is a few anecdotes, and that we need not be alarmed, though we should find it not dull, it is regaining credit.—3. Æschylus, the grandest of the three tragedians, who has given us under a thin veil the first plantation of Europe. The " Prometheus " is a poem of the like dignity and scope as the book of Job, or the Norse " Edda."—4. Of Plato I hesitate to speak, lest there should be no end. You find in him that which you have already found in Homer, now ripened to thought,—the poet converted to a philosopher, with

loftier strains of musical wisdom than Homer reached, as if Homer were the youth, and Plato the finished man ; yet with no less security of bold and perfect song, when he cares to use it, and with some harpstrings fetched from a higher heaven. He contains the future, as he came out of the past. In Plato, you explore modern Europe in its causes and seed,—all that in thought, which the history of Europe embodies or has yet to embody. The well-informed man finds himself anticipated. Plato is up with him, too. Nothing has escaped him. Every new crop in the fertile harvest of reform, every fresh suggestion of modern humanity is there. If the student wishes to see both sides, and justice done to the man of the world, pitiless exposure of pedants, and the supremacy of truth and the religious sentiment, he shall be contented also. Why should not young men be educated on this book ? It would suffice for the tuition of the race,—to test their understanding, and to express their reason. Here is that which is so attractive to all men,—the literature of aristocracy shall I call it ?—the picture of the best persons, sentiments, and manners, by the first master, in the best times,—portraits of Pericles, Alcibiades, Crito, Prodicus, Protagoras, Anaxagoras, and Socrates, with the lovely background of the Athenian and suburban landscape. Or who can overestimate the images with which he has enriched the minds of men, and which pass like bullion in the currency of all nations ? Read the “ Phædo,” the “ Protagoras,” the “ Phædrus,” the “ Timæus,” the “ Republic,” and the “ Apology of Socrates.”—5. Plutarch cannot be spared from the smallest library ; first, because he is so readable, which is much ; then, that he is medicinal and

invigorating. The Lives of Cimon, Lycurgus, Alexander, Demosthenes, Phocion, Marcellus, and the rest, are what history has of best. But this book has taken care of itself, and the opinion of the world is expressed in the innumerable cheap editions, which make it as accessible as a newspaper. But Plutarch's "Morals" is less known, and seldom reprinted. Yet such a reader as I am writing to can as ill spare it as the "Lives." He will read in it the essays "On the Dæmon of Socrates," "On Isis and Osiris," "On Progress in Virtue," "On Garrulity," "On Love," and thank anew the art of printing, and the cheerful domain of ancient thinking. Plutarch charms by the facility of his associations; so that it signifies little where you open his book, you find yourselves at the Olympian tables. His memory is like the Isthmian Games, where all that was excellent in Greece was assembled, and you are stimulated and recruited by lyric verses, by philosophic sentiments, by the forms and behavior of heroes, by the worship of the gods, and by the passing of fillets, parsley and laurel wreaths, chariots, armor, sacred cups, and utensils of sacrifice. An inestimable trilogy of ancient social pictures are the three "Banquets" respectively of Plato, Xenophon, and Plutarch. Plutarch's has the least claim to historical accuracy; but the Meeting of the Seven Wise Masters is a charming portraiture of ancient manners and discourse, and is as clear as the voice of a fife, and entertaining as a French novel. Xenophon's delineation of Athenian manners is an accessory to Plato, and supplies traits of Socrates; whilst Plato's has merits of every kind,—being a repertory of the wisdom of the ancients on the subject of love,—a picture of a feast of wits, not less



descriptive than Aristophanes,—and, lastly, containing that ironical eulogy of Socrates which is the source from which all the portraits of that head current in Europe have been drawn.

Of course, a certain outline should be obtained of Greek history, in which the important moments and persons can be rightly set down ; but the shortest is the best, and, if one lacks stomach for Mr. Grote's voluminous annals, the old slight and popular summary of Goldsmith or Gillies will serve. The valuable part is the age of Pericles, and the next generation. And here we must read the " Clouds " of Aristophanes, and what more of that master we gain appetite for, to learn our way in the streets of Athens, and to know the tyranny of Aristophanes, requiring more genius and sometimes not less cruelty than belonged to the official commanders. Aristophanes is now very accessible, with much valuable commentary, through the labors of Mitchell and Cartwright. An excellent popular book is J. A. St. John's " Ancient Greece " ; the " Life and Letters " of Niebuhr, even more than his Lectures, furnish leading views ; and Winckelmann, a Greek born out of due time, has become essential to an intimate knowledge of the Attic genius. The secret of the recent histories in German and in English is the discovery, owed first to Wolff, and later to Boeckh, that the sincere Greek history of that period must be drawn from Demosthenes, specially from the business orations, and from the comic poets.

If we come down a little by natural steps from the master to the disciples, we have, six or seven centuries later, the Platonists,—who also cannot be skipped,—Plotinus, Porphyry, Proclus, Synesius, Jamblichus.

Of Jamblichus the Emperor Julian said, "that he was posterior to Plato in time, not in genius." Of Plotinus, we have eulogies by Porphyry and Longinus, and the favor of the Emperor Gallienus,—indicating the respect he inspired among his contemporaries. If any one who had read with interest the "Isis and Osiris" of Plutarch should then read a chapter called "Providence," by Synesius, translated into English by Thomas Taylor, he will find it one of the majestic remains of literature, and, like one walking in the noblest of temples, will conceive new gratitude to his fellowmen, and a new estimate of their nobility. The imaginative scholar will find few stimulants to his brain like these writers. He has entered the Elysian Fields; and the grand and pleasing figures of gods and dæmons and dæmoniacal men, of the "azonic" and "aquatic gods," dæmons with fulgid eyes, and all the rest of the Platonic rhetoric, exalted a little under the African sun, sail before his eyes. The acolyte has mounted the tripod over the cave at Delphi; his heart dances, his sight is quickened. These guides speak of the gods with such depth and with such pictorial details, as if they had been bodily present at the Olympian feasts. The reader of these books makes new acquaintance with his own mind; new regions of thought are opened. Jamblichus's "Life of Pythagoras" works more directly on the will than the others; since Pythagoras was eminently a practical person, the founder of a school of ascetics and socialists, a planter of colonies, and nowise a man of abstract studies alone.

The respectable and sometimes excellent translations of Bohn's Library have done for literature what rail-

roads have done for internal intercourse. I do not hesitate to read all the books I have named, and all good books, in translations. What is really best in any book is translatable,—any real insight or broad human sentiment. Nay, I observe, that, in our Bible, and other books of lofty moral tone, it seems easy and inevitable to render the rhythm and music of the original into phrases of equal melody. The Italians have a fling at translators, *i traditori traduttori*, but I thank them. I rarely read any Latin, Greek, German, Italian, sometimes not a French book in the original, which I can procure in a good version. I like to be beholden to the great metropolitan English speech, the sea which receives tributaries from every region under heaven. I should as soon think of swimming across Charles River, when I wish to go to Boston, as of reading all my books in originals, when I have them rendered for me in my mother tongue.

For history, there is great choice of ways to bring the student through early Rome. If he can read Livy, he has a good book ; but one of the short English compends, some Goldsmith or Ferguson, should be used, that will place in the cycle the bright stars of Plutarch. The poet Horace is the eye of the Augustan age ; Tacitus, the wisest of historians ; and Martial will give him Roman manners, and some very bad ones, in the early days of the Empire : but Martial must be read, if read at all, in his own tongue. These will bring him to Gibbon, who will take him in charge, and convey him with abundant entertainment down—with notice of all remarkable objects on the way—through fourteen hundred years of time. He cannot spare Gibbon, with his vast reading, with such wit and

continuity of mind, that, though never profound, his book is one of the conveniences of civilization, like the proposed railroad from New York to the Pacific,—and, I think, will be sure to send the reader to his “Memoirs of Himself,” and the “Extracts from my Journal,” and “Abstracts of my Readings,” which will spur the laziest scholar to emulation of his prodigious performance.

Now having our idler safe down as far as the fall of Constantinople in 1453, he is in very good courses; for here are trusty hands waiting for him. The cardinal facts of European history are soon learned. There is Dante’s poem, to open the Italian Republics of the Middle Age; Dante’s “Vita Nuova,” to explain Dante and Beatrice; and Boccaccio’s “Life of Dante,”—a great man to describe a greater. To help us, perhaps a volume or two of M. Sismondi’s “Italian Republics” will be as good as the entire sixteen. When we come to Michel Angelo, his Sonnets and Letters must be read, with his Life by Vasari, or, in our day, by Mr. Duppa. For the Church, and the Feudal Institution, Mr. Hallam’s “Middle Ages” will furnish, if superficial, yet readable and conceivable outlines.

The “Life of the Emperor Charles V.,” by the useful Robertson, is still the key of the following age. Ximenes, Columbus, Loyola, Luther, Erasmus, Melancthon, Francis I., Henry VIII., Elizabeth, and Henry IV. of France, are his contemporaries. It is a time of seeds and expansions, whereof our recent civilization is the fruit.

If now the relations of England to European affairs bring him to British ground, he is arrived at the very

moment when modern history takes new proportions. He can look back for the legends and mythology to the "Younger Edda" and the "Heimskringla" of Snorro Sturleson, to Mallet's "Northern Antiquities," to Ellis's "Metrical Romances," to Asser's "Life of Alfred," and Venerable Bede, and to the researches of Sharon Turner and Palgrave. Hume will serve him for an intelligent guide, and in the Elizabethan era he is at the richest period of the English mind, with the chief men of action and of thought which that nation has produced, and with a pregnant future before him. Here he has Shakespeare, Spenser, Sidney, Raleigh, Bacon, Chapman, Jonson, Ford, Beaumont and Fletcher, Herbert, Donne, Herrick; and Milton, Marvell, and Dryden, not long after.

In reading history, he is to prefer the history of individuals. He will not repent the time he gives to Bacon,—not if he read the "Advancement of Learning," the "Essays," the "Novum Organon," the "History of Henry VII.," and then all the "Letters," (especially those to the Earl of Devonshire, explaining the Essex business,) and all but his "Apophtegms."

The task is aided by the strong mutual light which these men shed on each other. Thus, the Works of Ben Jonson are a sort of hoop to bind all these fine persons together, and to the land to which they belong. He has written verses to or on all his notable contemporaries; and what with so many occasional poems, and the portrait sketches in his "Discoveries," and the gossiping record of his opinions in his conversations with Drummond of Hawthornden, has really illustrated the England of his time, if not to the same

extent, yet much in the same way, as Walter Scott has celebrated the persons and places of Scotland. Walton, Chapman, Herrick, and Sir Henry Wotton write also to the times.

Among the best books are certain *Autobiographies*: as, St. Augustine's Confessions; Benvenuto Cellini's Life; Montaigne's Essays; Lord Herbert of Cherbury's Memoirs; Memoirs of the Cardinal de Retz; Rousseau's Confessions; Linnæus's Diary; Gibbon's, Hume's, Franklin's, Burns's, Alfieri's, Goethe's, and Haydon's *Autobiographies*.

Another class of books, closely allied to these, and of like interest, are those which may be called *Table-Talks*; of which the best are Saadi's *Gulistan*; Luther's *Table-Talk*; Aubrey's *Lives*; Spence's *Anecdotes*; Selden's *Table-Talk*; Boswell's *Life of Johnson*; Eckermann's *Conversations with Goethe*; Coleridge's *Table-Talk*; and Hazlitt's *Life of Northcote*.

There is a class whose value I should designate as *favorites*; such as Froissart's *Chronicles*; Southey's *Chronicle of the Cid*; Cervantes; Sully's *Memoirs*; Rabelais; Montaigne; Izaak Walton; Evelyn; Sir Thomas Browne; Aubrey; Sterne; Horace Walpole; Lord Clarendon; Doctor Johnson; Burke, shedding floods of light on his times; Lamb; Landor; and De Quincey;—a list, of course, that may easily be swelled, as dependent on individual caprice. Many men are as tender and irritable as lovers in reference to these predilections. Indeed, a man's library is a sort of harem, and I observe that tender readers have a great pudence in showing their books to a stranger.

The annals of bibliography afford many examples of the delirious extent to which book-fancying can go,

when the legitimate delight in a book is transferred to a rare edition or to a manuscript. This mania reached its height about the beginning of the present century. For an autograph of Shakespeare one hundred and fifty-five guineas were given. In May, 1812, the library of the Duke of Roxburgh was sold. The sale lasted forty-two days,—we abridge the story from Dibdin,—and among the many curiosities was a copy of Boccaccio published by Valdarfer, at Venice, in 1471; the only perfect copy of this edition. Among the distinguished company which attended the sale were the Duke of Devonshire, Earl Spencer, and the Duke of Marlborough, then Marquis of Blandford. The bid stood at five hundred guineas. “A thousand guineas,” said Earl Spencer: “And ten,” added the Marquis. You might hear a pin drop. All eyes were bent on the bidders. Now they talked apart, now ate a biscuit, now made a bet, but without the least thought of yielding one to the other. “Two thousand pounds,” said the Marquis. The Earl Spencer bethought him like a prudent general of useless bloodshed and waste of powder, and had paused a quarter of a minute, when Lord Althorp with long steps came to his side, as if to bring his father a fresh lance to renew the fight. Father and son whispered together, and Earl Spencer exclaimed, “Two thousand two hundred and fifty pounds!” An electric shock went through the assembly. “And ten,” quietly added the Marquis. There ended the strife. Ere Evans let the hammer fall, he paused; the ivory instrument swept the air; the spectators stood dumb, when the hammer fell. The stroke of its fall sounded on the farthest shores of Italy. The tap of that hammer was heard in the libraries of Rome, Milan,

and Venice. Boccaccio stirred in his sleep of five hundred years, and M. Van Praet groped in vain amidst the royal alcoves in Paris, to detect a copy of the famed Valdarfer Boccaccio.

Another class I distinguish by the term *Vocabularies*. Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy" is a book of great learning. To read it is like reading in a dictionary. 'Tis an inventory to remind us how many classes and species of facts exist, and, in observing into what strange and multiplex by-ways learning has strayed, to infer our opulence. Neither is a dictionary a bad book to read. There is no cant in it, no excess of explanation, and it is full of suggestion,—the raw material of possible poems and histories. Nothing is wanting but a little shuffling, sorting, ligature, and cartilage. Out of a hundred examples, Cornelius Agrippa "On the Vanity of Arts and Sciences" is a specimen of that scribatiuousness which grew to be the habit of the gluttonous readers of his time. Like the modern Germans, they read a literature, whilst other mortals read a few books. They read voraciously, and must disburden themselves; so they take any general topic, as, Melancholy, or Praise of Science, or Praise of Folly, and write and quote without method or end. Now and then out of that affluence of their learning comes a fine sentence from Theophrastus, or Seneca, or Boëthius, but no high method, no inspiring efflux. But one cannot afford to read for a few sentences; they are good only as strings of suggestive words.

There is another class more needful to the present age, because the currents of custom run now in another direction, and leave us dry on this side;—I mean the *Imaginative*. A right metaphysics should do justice



to the coördinate powers of Imagination, Insight, Understanding, and Will. Poetry, with its aids of Mythology and Romance, must be well allowed for an imaginative creature. Men are ever lapsing into a beggarly habit, wherein everything that is not ciphering, that is, which does not serve the tyrannical animal, is hustled out of sight. Our orators and writers are of the same poverty, and, in this rag-fair, neither the Imagination, the great awakening power, nor the Morals, creative of genius and of men, are addressed. But though orator and poet are of this hunger party, the capacities remain. We must have symbols. The child asks you for a story, and is thankful for the poorest. It is not poor to him, but radiant with meaning. The man asks for a novel,—that is, asks leave, for a few hours, to be a poet, and to paint things as they ought to be. The youth asks for a poem. The very dunces wish to go to the theater. What private heavens can we not open, by yielding to all the suggestion of rich music! We must have idolatries, mythologies, some swing and verge for the creative power lying coiled and cramped here, driving ardent natures to insanity and crime, if it do not find vent. Without the great and beautiful arts which speak to the sense of beauty, a man seems to me a poor, naked, shivering creature. These are his becoming draperies, which warm and adorn him. Whilst the prudential and economical tone of society starves the imagination, affronted Nature gets such indemnity as she may. The novel is that allowance and frolic the imagination finds. Everything else pins it down, and men flee for redress to Byron, Scott, Disraeli, Dumas, Sand, Balzac, Dickens, Thackeray, and Reade. Their education is

neglected ; but the circulating library and the theater, as well as the trout-fishing, the Notch Mountains, the Adirondac country, the tour to Mont Blanc, to the White Hills, and the Ghauts, make such amends as they can.

The imagination infuses a certain volatility and intoxication. It has a flute which sets the atoms of our frame in a dance, like planets, and, once so liberated, the whole man reeling drunk to the music, they never quite subside to their old stony state. But what is the Imagination ? Only an arm or weapon of the interior energy ; only the precursor of the Reason. And books that treat the old pedantries of the world, our times, places, professions, customs, opinions, histories, with a certain freedom, and distribute things, not after the usages of America and Europe, but after the laws of right reason, and with as daring a freedom as we use in dreams, put us on our feet again, enable us to form an original judgment of our duties, and suggest new thoughts for to-morrow.

“ Lucrezia Floriani,” “ Le Péché de M. Antoine,” “ Jeanne,” of George Sand, are great steps from the novel of one termination, which we all read twenty years ago. Yet how far off from life and manners and motives the novel still is ! Life lies about us dumb ; the day, as we know it, has not yet found a tongue. These stories are to the plots of real life what the figures in “ La Belle Assemblée,” which represent the fashion of the month, are to portraits. But the novel will find the way to our interiors one day, and will not always be the novel of costume merely. I do not think them inoperative now. So much novel-reading cannot leave the young men and maidens untouched ; and

doubtless it gives some ideal dignity to the day. The young study noble behavior; and as the player in "Consuelo" insists that he and his colleagues on the boards have taught princes the fine etiquette and strokes of grace and dignity which they practise with so much effect in their villas and among their dependents, so I often see traces of the Scotch or the French novel in the courtesy and brilliancy of young midshipmen, collegians, and clerks. Indeed, when one observes how ill and ugly people make their loves and quarrels, 'tis pity they should not read novels a little more, to import the fine generousities, and the clear, firm conduct, which are as becoming in the unions and separations which love effects under shingle roofs as in palaces and among illustrious personages.

In novels the most serious questions are really beginning to be discussed. What made the popularity of "Jane Eyre," but that a central question was answered in some sort? The question there answered in regard to a vicious marriage will always be treated according to the habit of the party. A person of commanding individualism will answer it as Rochester does,—as Cleopatra, as Milton, as George Sand do,—magnifying the exception into a rule, dwarfing the world into an exception. A person of less courage, that is, of less constitution, will answer as the heroine does,—giving way to fate, to conventionalism, to the actual state and doings of men and women.

For the most part, our novel-reading is a passion for results. We admire parks, and high-born beauties, and the homage of drawing-rooms, and parliaments. They make us skeptical, by giving prominence to wealth and social position.

I remember when some peering eyes of boys discovered that the oranges hanging on the boughs of an orange-tree in a gay piazza were tied to the twigs by thread. I fear 'tis so with the novelist's prosperities. Nature has a magic by which she fits the man to his fortunes, by making them the fruit of his character. But the novelist plucks this event here, and that fortune there, and ties them rashly to his figures, to tickle the fancy of his readers with a cloying success, or scare them with shocks of tragedy. And so, on the whole, 'tis a juggle. We are cheated into laughter or wonder by feats which only oddly combine acts that we do every day. There is no new element, no power, no furtherance. 'Tis only confectionery, not the raising of new corn. Great is the poverty of their inventions. *She was beautiful, and he fell in love.* Money, and killing, and the Wandering Jew, and persuading the lover that his mistress is betrothed to another,—these are the mainsprings; new names, but no new qualities in the men and women. Hence the vain endeavor to keep any bit of this fairy gold, which has rolled like a brook through our hands. A thousand thoughts awoke; great rainbows seemed to span the sky; a morning among the mountains;—but we close the book, and not a ray remains in the memory of evening. But this passion for romance, and this disappointment, show how much we need real elevations and pure poetry; that which shall show us, in morning and night, in stars and mountains, and in all the plight and circumstance of men, the analogons of our own thoughts, and a like impression made by a just book and by the face of Nature.

If our times are sterile in genius, we must cheer us

with books of rich and believing men who had atmosphere and amplitude about them. Every good fable, every mythology, every biography out of a religious age, every passage of love, and even philosophy and science, when they proceed from an intellectual integrity, and are not detached and critical, have the imaginative element. The Greek fables, the Persian history, (Firdousi,) the "Younger Edda" of the Scandinavians, the "Chronicle of the Cid," the poem of Dante, the Sonnets of Michel Angelo, the English drama of Shakespeare, Beaumont and Fletcher, and Ford, and even the prose of Bacon and Milton,—in our time, the ode of Wordsworth, and the poems and the prose of Goethe, have this richness, and leave room for hope and for generous attempts.

There is no room left,—and yet I might as well not have begun as to leave out a class of books which are the best: I mean the Bibles of the world, or the sacred books of each nation, which express for each the supreme result of their experience. After the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures, which constitute the sacred books of Christendom, these are, the Desatir of the Persians, and the Zoroastrian Oracles; the Vedas and Laws of Menu; the Upanishads, the Vishnu Purana, the Bhagvat Geeta, of the Hindoos; the books of the Buddhists; the "Chinese Classic," of four books, containing the wisdom of Confucius and Mencius. Also such other books as have acquired a semi-canonical authority in the world, as expressing the highest sentiment and hope of nations. Such are the "Hermes Trismegistus," pretending to be Egyptian remains; the "Sentences" of Epictetus; of Marcus Antoninus; the "Vishnu Sarma" of the Hindoos; the "Gulistan"

of Saadi; the "Imitation of Christ," of Thomas à Kempis; and the "Thoughts" of Pascal.

All these books are the majestic expressions of the universal conscience, and are more to our daily purpose than this year's almanac or this day's newspaper. But they are for the closet, and to be read on the bended knee. Their communications are not to be given or taken with the lips and the end of the tongue, but out of the glow of the cheek, and with the throbbing heart. Friendship should give and take, solitude and time brood and ripen, heroes absorb and enact them. They are not to be held by letters printed on a page, but are living characters translatable into every tongue and form of life. I read them on lichens and bark; I watch them on waves on the beach; they fly in birds, they creep in worms; I detect them in laughter and blushes and eye-sparkles of men and women. These are Scriptures which the missionary might well carry over prairie, desert, and ocean, to Siberia, Japan, Timbuctoo. Yet he will find that the spirit which is in them journeys faster than he, and greets him on his arrival,—was there already long before him. The missionary must be carried by it, and find it there, or he goes in vain. Is there any geography in these things? We call them Asiatic, we call them primeval; but perhaps that is only optical; for Nature is always equal to herself, and there are as good pairs of eyes and ears now in the planet as ever were. Only these ejaculations of the soul are uttered one or a few at a time, at long intervals, and it takes millenniums to make a Bible.

These are a few of the books which the old and the later times have yielded us, which will reward the time

spent on them. In comparing the number of good books with the shortness of life, many might well be read by proxy, if we had good proxies ; and it would be well for sincere young men to borrow a hint from the French Institute and the British Association, and, as they divide the whole body into sections, each of which sit upon and report of certain matters confided to them, so let each scholar associate himself to such persons as he can rely on, in a literary club, in which each shall undertake a single work or series for which he is qualified. For example, how attractive is the whole literature of the "Roman de la Rose," the "Fabliaux," and the *gai science* of the French Troubadours ! Yet who in Boston has time for that ? But one of our company shall undertake it, shall study and master it, and shall report on it, as under oath ; shall give us the sincere result, as it lies in his mind, adding nothing, keeping nothing back. Another member, meantime, shall as honestly search, sift, and as truly report on British mythology, the Round Table, the histories of Brut, Merlin, and Welsh poetry ; a third, on the Saxon Chronicles, Robert of Gloucester, and William of Malmesbury ; a fourth, on Mysteries, Early Drama, "Gesta Romanorum," Collier, and Dyce, and the Camden Society. Each shall give us his grains of gold, after the washing ; and every other shall then decide whether this is a book indispensable to him also.

## A SONG OF BOOKS.

BY SIR JOHN LUBBOCK.

OF all the privileges we enjoy in this nineteenth century there is none, perhaps, for which we ought to be more thankful than for the easier access to books.

The debt we owe to books was well expressed by Richard de Bury, Bishop of Durham, author of *Philobiblon*, written as long ago as 1344, published in 1473, and the earliest English treatise on the delights of literature :—“ These,” he says, “ are the masters who instruct us without rods and ferules, without hard words and anger, without clothes or money. If you approach them, they are not asleep ; if investigating you interrogate them, they conceal nothing ; if you mistake them, they never grumble ; if you are ignorant, they cannot laugh at you. The library, therefore, of wisdom is more precious than all riches, and nothing that can be wished for is worthy to be compared with it. Whosoever therefore acknowledges himself to be a zealous follower of truth, of happiness, of wisdom, of science, or even of the faith, must of necessity make himself a lover of books.” But if the debt were great then, how much more now.

This feeling that books are real friends is constantly present to all who love reading. “ I have friends,” said Petrarch, “ whose society is extremely agreeable



to me ; they are of all ages, and of every country. They have distinguished themselves both in the cabinet and in the field, and obtained high honors for their knowledge of the sciences. It is easy to gain access to them, for they are always at my service, and I admit them to my company, and dismiss them from it, whenever I please. They are never troublesome, but immediately answer every question I ask them. Some relate to me the events of past ages, while others reveal to me the secrets of Nature. Some teach me how to live, and others how to die. Some, by their vivacity, drive away my cares and exhilarate my spirits ; while others give fortitude to my mind, and teach me the important lesson how to restrain my desires, and to depend wholly on myself. They open to me, in short, the various avenues of all the arts and sciences, and upon their information I may safely rely in all emergencies. In return for all their services, they only ask me to accommodate them with a convenient chamber in some corner of my humble habitation, where they may repose in peace ; for these friends are more delighted by the tranquillity of retirement than with the tumults of society."

"He that loveth a book," says Isaac Barrow, "will never want a faithful friend, a wholesome counsellor, a cheerful companion, an effectual comforter. By study, by reading, by thinking, one may innocently divert and pleasantly entertain himself, as in all weathers, so in all fortunes."

Southey took a rather more melancholy view :

"My days among the dead are pass'd,  
Around me I behold,  
Where'er these casual eyes are cast,

The mighty minds of old ;  
 My never-failing friends are they,  
 With whom I converse day by day."

Imagine, in the words of Aikin, "that we had it in our power to call up the shapes of the greatest and wisest men that ever existed, and oblige them to converse with us on the most interesting topics—what an inestimable privilege should we think it!—how superior to all common enjoyments! But in a well-furnished library we, in fact, possess this power. We can question Xenophon and Cæsar on their campaigns, make Demosthenes and Cicero plead before us, join in the audiences of Socrates and Plato, and receive demonstrations from Euclid and Newton. In books we have the choicest thoughts of the ablest men in their best dress."

"Books," says Jeremy Collier, "are a guide in youth and an entertainment for age. They support us under solitude, and keep us from being a burthen to ourselves. They help us to forget the crossness of men and things; compose our cares and our passions; and lay our disappointments asleep. When we are weary of the living, we may repair to the dead, who have nothing of peevishness, pride, or design in their conversation."

Sir John Herschel tells an amusing anecdote illustrating the pleasure derived from a book, not assuredly of the first order. In a certain village the blacksmith had got hold of Richardson's novel, *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded*, and used to sit on his anvil in the long summer evenings and read it aloud to a large and attentive audience. It is by no means a short book, but they fairly listened to it all. At length, when the

happy turn of fortune arrived, which brings the hero and heroine together, and sets them living long and happily together according to the most approved rules, the congregation were so delighted as to raise a great shout, and procuring the church keys, actually set the parish bells a-ringing.

“The lover of reading,” says Leigh Hunt, “will derive agreeable terror from *Sir Bertram* and the *Haunted Chamber*; will assent with delighted reason to every sentence in *Mrs. Barbauld’s Essay*; will feel himself wandering into solitudes with *Gray*; shake honest hands with *Sir Roger de Coverley*; be ready to embrace *Parson Adams*, and to chuck *Pounce* out of the window instead of the hat; will travel with *Marco Polo* and *Mungo Park*; stay at home with *Thomson*; retire with *Cowley*; be industrious with *Hutton*; sympathizing with *Gay* and *Mrs. Inchbald*; laughing with (and at) *Bunclé*; melancholy, and forlorn, and self-restored with the shipwrecked mariner of *De Foe*.”

Carlyle has wisely said that a collection of books is a real university.

The importance of books has been appreciated in many quarters where we might least expect it. Among the hardy Norsemen runes were supposed to be endowed with miraculous power. There is an Arabic proverb, that “a wise man’s day is worth a fool’s life,” and another—though it reflects perhaps rather the spirit of the Califs than of the Sultans,—that “the ink of science is more precious than the blood of the martyrs.”

Confucius is said to have described himself as a man who “in his eager pursuit of knowledge forgot his food, who in the joy of its attainment forgot his sor-

rows, and did not even perceive that old age was coming on."

Yet, if this could be said by the Chinese and the Arabs, what language can be strong enough to express the gratitude we ought to feel for the advantages we enjoy! We do not appreciate, I think, our good fortune in belonging to the nineteenth century. Sometimes, indeed, one may even be inclined to wish that one had not lived quite so soon, and to long for a glimpse of the books, even the school-books, of one hundred years hence. A hundred years ago not only were books extremely expensive and cumbrous, but many of the most delightful were still uncreated—such as the works of Scott, Thackeray, Dickens, Bulwer Lytton, and Trollope, not to mention living authors. How much more interesting science has become especially, if I were to mention only one name, through the genius of Darwin! Renan has characterized this as a most amusing century; I should rather have described it as most interesting: presenting us as it does with an endless vista of absorbing problems; with infinite opportunities; with more interest and less danger than surrounded our less fortunate ancestors.

Cicero described a room without books, as a body without a soul. But it is by no means necessary to be a philosopher to love reading.

Reading, indeed, is by no means necessarily study. Far from it. "I put," says Mr. Frederic Harrison, in his excellent article on the "Choice of Books," "I put the poetic and emotional side of literature as the most needed for daily use."

In the prologue to the *Legende of Goode Women*, Chaucer says :

" And as for me, though that I konne but lyte,  
 On bokes for to rede I me delyte,  
 And to him give I feyth and ful credence,  
 And in myn herte have him in reverence,  
 So hertely, that ther is game noon,  
 That fro my bokes maketh me to goon,  
 But yt be seldome on the holy day,  
 Save, certynly, when that the monthe of May  
 Is comen, and that I here the foules synge,  
 And that the floures gynnen for to sprynge,  
 Farwel my boke and my devocion."

But I doubt whether, if he had enjoyed our advantages, he could have been so certain of tearing himself away, even in the month of May.

Macaulay, who had all that wealth and fame, rank and talents could give, yet, we are told, derived his greatest happiness from books. Sir G. Trevelyan, in his charming biography, says that—"of the feelings which Macaulay entertained towards the great minds of bygone ages it is not for any one except himself to speak. He has told us how his debt to them was incalculable; how they guided him to truth; how they filled his mind with noble and graceful images; how they stood by him in all vicissitudes—comforters in sorrow, nurses in sickness, companions in solitude, the old friends who are never seen with new faces; who are the same in wealth and in poverty, in glory and in obscurity. Great as were the honors and possessions which Macaulay acquired by his pen, all who knew him were well aware that the titles and rewards which he gained by his own works were as nothing in the balance compared with the pleasure he derived from the works of others."

There was no society in London so agreeable that

Macaulay would have preferred it at breakfast or at dinner "to the company of Sterne or Fielding, Horace Walpole or Boswell." The love of reading which Gibbon declared he would not exchange for all the treasures of India was, in fact, with Macaulay "a main element of happiness in one of the happiest lives that it has ever fallen to the lot of the biographer to record."

"History," says Fuller, "maketh a young man to be old without either wrinkles or gray hair, privileging him with the experience of age without either the infirmities or the inconveniences thereof."

So delightful indeed are our books that we must be careful not to forget other duties for them; in cultivating the mind we must not neglect the body.

To the lover of literature or science, exercise often presents itself as an irksome duty, and many a one has felt like "the fair pupil of Ascham (Lady Jane Grey), who, while the horns were sounding and dogs in full cry, sat in the lonely oriel, with eyes riveted to that immortal page which tells how meekly and bravely (Socrates) the first martyr of intellectual liberty took the cup from his weeping jailer."<sup>1</sup>

Still, as the late Lord Derby justly observed,<sup>2</sup> those who do not find time for exercise will have to find time for illness.

Books, again, are now so cheap as to be within the reach of almost every one. This was not always so. It is quite a recent blessing. Mr. Ireland, to whose charming little *Book Lover's Enchiridion*, in common with every lover of reading, I am greatly indebted, tells us that when a boy he was so delighted with White's

<sup>1</sup> Macaulay.

<sup>2</sup> Address, Liverpool College, 1873.

*Natural History of Selborne*, that in order to possess a copy of his own he actually copied out the whole work.

Mary Lamb gives a pathetic description of a studious boy lingering at a bookstall :

“ I saw a boy with eager eye  
Open a book upon a stall,  
And read, as he'd devour it all ;  
Which, when the stall man did espy  
Soon to the boy I heard him call,  
' You, sir, you never buy a book,  
Therefore in one you shall not look.'  
The boy passed slowly on, and with a sigh  
He wished he never had been taught to read,  
Then of the old churl's books he should have had no need.”

Such snatches of literature have indeed a special and peculiar charm. This is, I believe, partly due to the very fact of their being brief. Many readers miss much of the pleasure of reading by forcing themselves to dwell too long continuously on one subject. In a long railway journey, for instance, many persons take only a single book. The consequence is that, unless it is a story, after half an hour or an hour they are quite tired of it. Whereas, if they had two, or still better three books, on different subjects, and one of them being of an amusing character, they would probably find that, by changing as soon as they felt at all weary, they would come back again and again to each with renewed zest, and hour after hour would pass pleasantly away. Every one, of course, must judge for himself, but such at least is my experience.

I quite agree, therefore, with Lord Iddesleigh as to the charm of desultory reading, but the wider the field the more important that we should benefit by the very

best books in each class. Not that we need confine ourselves to them, but that we should commence with them, and they will certainly lead us on to others. There are of course some books which we must read, mark, learn and inwardly digest. But these are exceptions. As regards by far the larger number, it is probably better to read them quickly, dwelling only on the best and most important passages. In this way, no doubt, we shall lose much, but we gain more by ranging over a wider field. We may, in fact, I think, apply to reading Lord Brougham's wise dictum as regards education, and say that it is well to read everything of something, and something of everything. In this way only we can ascertain the bent of our own tastes, for it is a general, though not of course an invariable, rule, that we profit little by books which we do not enjoy.

Every one, however, may suit himself. The variety is endless.

Not only does a library contain "infinite riches in a little room,"<sup>1</sup> but we may sit at home and yet be in all quarters of the earth. We may travel round the world with Captain Cook or Darwin, with Kingsley or Ruskin, who will show us much more perhaps than ever we should see for ourselves. The world itself has no limits for us ; Humboldt and Herschel will carry us far away to the mysterious nebulæ, beyond the sun and even the stars : time has no more bounds than space ; history stretches out behind us, and geology will carry us back for millions of years before the creation of man, even to the origin of the material Universe itself. Nor are we limited to one plane of thought. Aristotle and

<sup>1</sup> Marlowe.



Plato will transport us into a sphere none the less delightful because we cannot appreciate it without some training.

Comfort and consolation, refreshment and happiness, may indeed be found in his library by any one "who shall bring the golden key that unlocks its silent door."<sup>1</sup> A library is true fairyland, a very palace of delight, a haven of repose from the storms and troubles of the world. Rich and poor can enjoy it equally, for here, at least, wealth gives no advantage. We may make a library, if we do but rightly use it, a true paradise on earth, a garden of Eden without its one drawback; for all is open to us, including, and especially, the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, for which we are told that our first mother sacrificed all the Pleasures of Paradise. Here we may read the most important histories, the most exciting volumes of travels and adventures, the most interesting stories, the most beautiful poems; we may meet the most eminent statesmen, poets, and philosophers, benefit by the ideas of the greatest thinkers, and enjoy the grandest creations of human genius.

<sup>1</sup> Matthews.

## THE CHOICE OF BOOKS.

BY SIR JOHN LUBBOCK.

“ All round the room my silent servants wait—  
My friends in every season, bright and dim,  
Angels and Seraphim  
Come down and murmur to me, sweet and low,  
And spirits of the skies all come and go  
Early and Late.”

PROCTOR.

AND yet too often they wait in vain. One reason for this is, I think, that people are overwhelmed by the crowd of books offered to them.

In old days books were rare and dear. Now on the contrary, it may be said with greater truth than ever that

“ Words are things, and a small drop of ink,  
Falling like dew upon a thought, produces  
That which makes thousands, perhaps millions, think.”<sup>1</sup>

Our ancestors had a difficulty in procuring them. Our difficulty now is what to select. We must be careful what we read, and not, like the sailors of Ulysses, take bags of wind for sacks of treasure—not only lest we should even now fall into the error of the Greeks, and suppose that language and definitions can be instruments of investigation as well as of thought, but lest, as too often happens, we should waste time over

<sup>1</sup> Byron.

trash. There are many books to which one may apply, in the sarcastic sense, the ambiguous remark said to have been made to an unfortunate author, "I will lose no time in reading your book."

There are, indeed, books and books, and there are books which, as Lamb said, are not books at all. It is wonderful how much innocent happiness we thoughtlessly throw away. An Eastern proverb says that calamities sent by heaven may be avoided, but from those we bring on ourselves there is no escape.

Many, I believe, are deterred from attempting what are called stiff books for fear they should not understand them; but there are few who need complain of the narrowness of their minds, if only they would do their best with them,

In reading, however, it is most important to select subjects in which one is interested. I remember years ago consulting Mr. Darwin as to the selection of a course of study. He asked me what interested me most, and advised me to choose that subject. This, indeed, applies to the work of life generally.

I am sometimes disposed to think that the great readers of the next generation will be, not our lawyers and doctors, shopkeepers and manufacturers, but the laborers and mechanics. Does not this seem natural? The former work mainly with their head; when their daily duties are over the brain is often exhausted, and of their leisure time much must be devoted to air and exercise. The laborer and mechanic, on the contrary, besides working often for much shorter hours, have in their work-time taken sufficient bodily exercise, and could therefore give any leisure they might have to reading and study. They have not done so as yet, it

is true ; but this has been for obvious reasons. Now, however, in the first place, they receive an excellent education in elementary schools, and in the second have more easy access to the best books.

Ruskin has observed that he does not wonder at what men suffer, but he often wonders at what they lose. We suffer much, no doubt, from the faults of others, but we lose much more by our own ignorance.

“ If,” says Sir John Herschel, “ I were to pray for a taste which should stand me in stead under every variety of circumstances, and be a source of happiness and cheerfulness to me through life, and a shield against its ills, however things might go amiss and the world frown upon me, it would be a taste for reading. I speak of it of course only as a wordly advantage, and not in the slightest degree as superseding or derogating from the higher office and surer and stronger panoply of religious principles—but as a taste, an instrument, and a mode of pleasurable gratification. Give a man this taste, and the means of gratifying it, and you can hardly fail of making a happy man, unless, indeed, you put into his hands a most perverse selection of books.”

It is one thing to own a library ; it is quite another to use it wisely. I have often been astonished how little care people devote to the selection of what they read. Books, we know, are almost innumerable ; our hours for reading are, alas ! very few. And yet many people read almost by hazard. They will take any book they chance to find in a room at a friend's house ; they will buy a novel at a railway-stall if it has an attractive title ; indeed, I believe in some cases even the binding affects their choice. The selection is, no

doubt, far from easy. I have often wished some one would recommend a list of a hundred good books. If we had such lists drawn up by a few good guides they would be most useful. I have indeed sometimes heard it said that in reading every one must choose for himself, but this reminds me of the recommendation not to go into the water till you can swim.

In the absence of such lists I have picked out the books most frequently mentioned with approval by those who have referred directly or indirectly to the pleasure of reading, and have ventured to include some which, though less frequently mentioned, are especial favorites of my own. Every one who looks at the list will wish to suggest other books, as indeed I should myself, but in that case the number would soon run up.

I have abstained, for obvious reasons, from mentioning works by living authors, though from many of them—Tennyson, Ruskin, and others—I have myself derived the keenest enjoyment; and I have omitted works on science, with one or two exceptions, because the subject is so progressive.

I feel that the attempt is over bold, and I must beg for indulgence, while hoping for criticism; indeed one object which I have had in view is to stimulate others more competent far than I am to give us the advantage of their opinions.

Moreover, I must repeat that I suggest these works rather as those which, as far as I have seen, have been most frequently recommended, than as suggestions of my own, though I have slipped in a few of my own special favorites.

In any such selection much weight should, I think,

be attached to the general verdict of mankind. There is a "struggle for existence" and a "survival of the fittest" among books, as well as among animals and plants. As Alonzo of Aragon said, "Age is a recommendation in four things—old wood to burn, old wine to drink, old friends to trust, and old books to read." Still, this cannot be accepted without important qualifications. The most recent books of history and science contain, or ought to contain, the most accurate information and the most trustworthy conclusions. Moreover, while the books of other races and times have an interest from their very distance, it must be admitted that many will still more enjoy, and feel more at home with, those of our own century and people.

Yet the oldest books of the world are remarkable and interesting on account of their very age; and the works which have influenced the opinions, or charmed the leisure hours, of millions of men in distant times and far-away regions are well worth reading on that very account, even if to us they seem scarcely to deserve their reputation. It is true that to many such works are accessible only in translations; but translations, though they can never perhaps do justice to the original, may yet be admirable in themselves. The Bible itself, which must stand first in the list, is a conclusive case.

At the head of all non-Christian moralists, I must place the *Enchiridion* of Epictetus, certainly one of the noblest books in the whole of literature; so short, moreover, so accessible, and so well translated that it is always a source of wonder to me that it is so little read. With Epictetus I think must come Marcus Aurelius. The *Analects* of Confucius will, I believe,

prove disappointing to most English readers, but the effect it has produced on the most numerous race of men constitutes in itself a peculiar interest. The *Ethics* of Aristotle, perhaps, appear to some disadvantage from the very fact that they have so profoundly influenced our views of morality. The *Koran*, like the *Analects* of Confucius, will to most of us derive its principal interest from the effect it has exercised, and still exercises, on so many millions of our fellow-men. I doubt whether in any other respect it will seem to repay perusal, and to most persons probably certain extracts, not too numerous, would appear sufficient.

The writings of the Apostolic Fathers have been collected in one volume by Wake. It is but a small one, and though I must humbly confess that I was disappointed, they are perhaps all the more curious from the contrast they afford to those of the Apostles themselves. Of the later Fathers I have included only the *Confessions* of St. Augustine, which Dr. Pusey selected for the commencement of the *Library of the Fathers*, and which, as he observes, has "been translated again and again into almost every European language, and in all loved;" though Luther was of opinion that St. Augustine "wrote nothing to the purpose concerning faith;" but then Luther was no great admirer of the Fathers. St. Jerome, he says, "writes, alas! very coldly;" Chrysostom "digresses from the chief points;" St. Jerome is "very poor;" and in fact, he says, "the more I read the books of the Fathers the more I find myself offended;" while Renan, in his interesting autobiography, compared theology to a Gothic Cathedral, "elle a la grandeur, les vides immenses, et le peu de solidité."

Among other devotional works most frequently recommended are Thomas à Kempis's *Imitation of Christ*, Pascal's *Pensées*, Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, Butler's *Analogy of Religion*, Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living and Dying*, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, and last, not least, Keble's beautiful *Christian Year*.

Aristotle and Plato again stand at the head of another class. The *Politics* of Aristotle, and Plato's *Dialogues*, if not the whole, at any rate the *Phædo*, the *Apology*, and the *Republic*, will be of course read by all who wish to know anything of the history of human thought, though I am heretical enough to doubt whether the latter repays the minute and laborious study often devoted to it.

Aristotle being the father, if not the creator, of the modern scientific method, it has followed naturally—indeed, almost inevitably—that his principles have become part of our very intellectual being, so that they seem now almost self-evident, while his actual observations, though very remarkable—as, for instance, when he observes that bees on one journey confine themselves to one kind of flower—still have been in many cases superseded by others, carried on under more favorable conditions. We must not be ungrateful to the great master, because his own lessons have taught us how to advance.

Plato, on the other hand, I say so with all respect, seems to me in some cases to play on words: his arguments are very able, very philosophical, often very noble; but not always conclusive; in a language differently constructed they might sometimes tell in exactly the opposite sense. If this method has proved less fruitful, if in metaphysics we have made but little



advance, that very fact in one point of view leaves the *Dialogues* of Socrates as instructive now as ever they were; while the problems with which they deal will always rouse our interest, as the calm and lofty spirit which inspires them must command our admiration. Of the *Apology* and the *Phædo* especially it would be impossible to speak too gratefully.

I would also mention Demosthenes's *De Coronâ*, which Lord Brougham pronounced the greatest oration of the greatest of orators; Lucretius, Plutarch's *Lives*, Horace, and at least the *De Officiis*, *De Amicitia*, and *De Senectute* of Cicero.

The great epics of the world have always constituted one of the most popular branches of literature. Yet how few, comparatively, ever read Homer or Virgil after leaving school.

The *Nibelungenlied*, our great Anglo-Saxon epic, is perhaps too much neglected, no doubt on account of its painful character. Brunhild and Kriemhild, indeed, are far from perfect, but we meet with few such "live" women in Greek or Roman literature. Nor must I omit to mention Sir T. Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, though I confess I do so mainly in deference to the judgment of others.

Among the Greek tragedians, Æschylus, if not all his works, at any rate *Prometheus*, perhaps the sublimest poem in Greek literature, and the *Trilogy* (Mr. Symonds in his *Greek Poets* speaks of the "unrivalled majesty" of the *Agamemnon*, and Mark Pattison considered it "the grandest work of creative genius in the whole range of literature"); or, as Sir M. E. Grant Duff recommends, the *Persæ*; Sophocles (*Œdipus Tyrannus*), Euripides (*Medea*), and Aristophanes (*The*

*Knights and Clouds*); unfortunately, as Schlegel says, probably even the greatest scholar does not understand half his jokes; and I think most modern readers will prefer our modern poets.

I should like, moreover, to say a word for Eastern poetry, such as portions of the *Maha Bharata* and *Ramayana* (too long probably to be read through, but of which Talboys Wheeler has given a most interesting epitome in the first two volumes of his *History of India*); the *Shah-nameh*, the work of the great Persian poet Firdusi; Kalidasa's *Sakuntala*, and the Sheking, the classical collection of ancient Chinese odes. Many, I know, will think I ought to have included Omar Khayyam.

In history we are beginning to feel that the vices and vicissitudes of kings and queens, the dates of battles and wars, are far less important than the development of human thought, the progress of art, of science, and of law, and the subject is on that very account even more interesting than ever. I will, however, only mention, and that rather from a literary than a historical point of view, Herodotus, Xenophon (the *Anabasis*), Thucydides, and Tacitus (*Germania*); and of modern historians, Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* ("the splendid bridge from the old world to the new"), Hume's *History of England*, Carlyle's *French Revolution*, Grote's *History of Greece*, and Green's *Short History of the English People*.

Science is so rapidly progressive that, though to many minds it is the most fruitful and interesting subject of all, I cannot here rest on that agreement which, rather than my own opinion, I take as the basis of my list. I will therefore only mention Bacon's *Novum Organum*,

Mill's *Logic*, and Darwin's *Origin of Species*; in Political Economy, which some of our rulers do not now sufficiently value, Mill, and parts of Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, for probably those who do not intend to make a special study of political economy would scarcely read the whole.

Among voyages and travels, perhaps those most frequently suggested are Cook's *Voyages*, Humboldt's *Travels*, and Darwin's *Naturalist's Journal*; though I confess I should like to have added many more.

Mr. Bright not long ago specially recommended the less known American poets, but he probably assumed that every one would have read Shakespeare, Milton (*Paradise Lost*, *Lycidas*, *Comus* and minor poems), Chaucer, Dante, Spenser, Dryden, Scott, Wordsworth, Pope, Southey, Byron, and others, before embarking on more doubtful adventures.

Among other books most frequently recommended are Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*, Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Arabian Nights*, *Don Quixote*, Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, White's *Natural History of Selborne*, Burke's *Select Works* (Payne), the *Essays of Bacon*, Addison, Hume, Montaigne, Macaulay, and Emerson; the plays of Molière and Sheridan; Carlyle's *Past and Present*, Smiles's *Self-Help*, and Goethe's *Faust* and *Autobiography*.

Nor can one go wrong in recommending Berkeley's *Human Knowledge*, Descartes's *Discours sur la Méthode*, Locke's *Conduct of the Understanding*, Lewes's *History of Philosophy*; while, in order to keep within the number one hundred, I can only mention Molière and Sheridan among dramatists. Macaulay considered Marivaux's *La Vie de Marianne* the best novel in any

language, but my number is so nearly complete that I must content myself with English : and will suggest Miss Austen (either *Emma* or *Pride and Prejudice*), Thackeray (*Vanity Fair* and *Pendennis*), Dickens (*Pickwick* and *David Copperfield*), G. Eliot (*Adam Bede* or *The Mill on the Floss*), Kingsley (*Westward Ho!*), Lytton (*Last Days of Pompeii*), and last, not least, those of Scott, which indeed constitute a library in themselves, but which I must ask, in return for my trouble, to be allowed, as a special favor, to count as one.

To any lover of books the very mention of these names brings back a crowd of delicious memories, grateful recollections of peaceful home hours, after the labors and anxieties of the day. How thankful we ought to be for these inestimable blessings, for this numberless host of friends who never weary, betray, or forsake us !

## FROM SOCRATES TO EMERSON.

SOCRATES, B.C. 468-399.

Employ your time in improving yourself by other men's writings ; so you shall come easily by what others have labored hard for.

CICERO, B.C. 106-41.

Keep your books, and do not despair of my being able to make them mine ; which, if I accomplish, I shall exceed Crœsus in riches, and look down with contempt upon the houses and lands of all the world.

SENECA, B.C. 58—A.D. 32.

It does not matter how many, but how good, books you have.

It is much better to trust yourself to a few good authors than to wander through several.

PLUTARCH, A.D. 46-120.

We ought to regard books as we do sweetmeats, not wholly to aim at the pleasantest, but chiefly to respect the wholesomest ; not forbidding either, but approving the latter most.

QUINTILIAN, A.D. 42-115.

Every good writer is to be read, and diligently ; and, when the volume is finished, is to be gone through again from the beginning.

ST. PAUL, A.D. 65.

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning.

FROM THE PERSIAN.

A wise man knows an ignorant one, because he has been ignorant himself ; but the ignorant cannot recognize the wise, because he has never been wise.

They asked their wisest man by what means he had attained to such a degree of knowledge ? He replied : " Whatever I did not know, I was not ashamed to inquire about."

HINDU SAYING.

The words of the good are like a staff in a slippery place.

RICHARD DE BURY, 1287-1345.

In Books we find the dead as it were living ; in Books we foresee things to come. These are the masters who instruct us without rods and ferules, without hard words and anger. If you approach them, they are not asleep ; if investigating you interrogate them, they conceal nothing ; if you mistake them, they never grumble ; if you are ignorant, they cannot laugh at you.

FRANCESCO PETRARCH, 1304-1374.

I have FRIENDS, whose society is extremely agreeable to me : they are of all ages and of every country. They have distinguished themselves both in the cabinet and in the field, and obtained high honors for their knowledge of the sciences. It is easy to gain access to them ; for they are always at my service, and I admit

them to my company, and dismiss them from it, whenever I please. They are never troublesome, but immediately answer every question I ask them. Some relate to me the events of past ages, while others reveal to me the secrets of nature. Some teach me how to live, and others how to die. Some, by their vivacity, drive away my cares and exhilarate my spirits, while others give fortitude to my mind, and teach me the important lesson how to restrain my desires, and to depend wholly on myself. They open to me, in short, the various avenues of all the arts and sciences, and upon their information I safely rely, in all emergencies. In return for all these services, they only ask me to accommodate them with a convenient chamber in some corner of my humble habitation, where they may repose in peace.

JOACHIMUS FORTIUS RINGELBERGIUS, D. 1536.

He who aspires to the character of a man of learning, has taken upon himself the performance of no common task. The ocean of literature is without limit. How then will he be able to perform a voyage, even to a moderate distance, if he waste his time in dalliance on the shore? Our only hope is in exertion.

DESIDERIUS ERASMUS, 1467-1536.

If you are in Doubt of any Thing, don't be ashamed to ask; or if you have committed an Error, to be corrected. A little before you go to sleep read something that is exquisite, and worth remembering; and contemplate upon it till you fall asleep; and when you awake in the Morning, call yourself to an Account for it.

## NICCOLO MACHIAVELLI, 1469-1527.

When evening has arrived, I return home, and go into my study. . . . I pass into the antique courts of ancient men, where, welcomed lovingly by them, I feed upon the food which is my own, and for which I was born. For hours together, the miseries of life no longer annoy me ; I forget every vexation ; I do not fear poverty ; for I have altogether transferred myself to those with whom I hold converse.

## ROGER ASCHAM, 1515-1568.

“I wist, all their sport in the park is but a shadow to that pleasure that I find in Plato. Alas ! good folk, they never felt what true pleasure meant.”

## MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE, 1537-1592.

To divert myself from a troublesome Fancy, 'tis but to run to my Books ; they presently fix me to them, and drive the other out of my Thoughts ; they always receive me with the same Kindness.

## JUSTUS LIPSIUS, 1547-1606.

When I read Seneca, methinks I am beyond all human fortune, on the top of a hill above mortality.

## JOHN LYLIE (or LILLY), 1553-1601.

Far more seemly were it for thee to have thy Studie full of Bookes, than thy Purses full of Mony.

## LORD BACON, 1561-1629.

Read not to contradict and confute, nor to believe and take for granted, nor to find talk and discourse, but to weigh and consider. Reading maketh a full



man ; conference a ready man ; and writing an exact man.

In studies, whatsoever a man commandeth upon himself let him set hours for it.

SAMUEL DANIEL, 1562-1619.

O blessed Letters ! that combine in one  
All Ages past, and make one live with all.  
By you we do confer with who are gone,  
And the Dead-living unto Council call.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, 1564-1616.

Knowing I loved my books, he furnished me,  
From my own library, with volumes that  
I prize above my dukedom.

ALONZO OF ARRAGON.

Old wood best to burn ; old wine to drink ; old  
friends to trust ; and old authors to read.

OLD ENGLISH SONG.

O for a Booke and a shadie nooke,  
eyther in-a-doore or out ;  
With the grene leaves whisp'ring overhede,  
or the Streete cryes all about.  
Where I maie Reade all at my ease,  
both of the Newe and Olde ;  
For a jollie goode Booke whereon to looke,  
is better to me than Golde.

A SIXTEENTH CENTURY WRITER.

Books are the Glasse of Counsell to dress ourselves  
by. They are Feelesse Counsellours, no delaying  
Patrons, of easie Accesse, and kind Expedition, never

sending away empty any Client or Petitioner. They are for Company, the best Friends ; in doubts, Counsellours ; in Damp, Comforters ; Time's Perspective ; the home Traveller's Ship, or Horse ; the busie man's best Recreation ; the Opiate of Idle weariness ; the mind's best Ordinary ; Nature's Garden and Seed-plot of Immortality.

JOSEPH HALL, 1574-1656.

How much sweeter then is the fruit of study, the conscience of knowledge ? In comparison whereof the soul that hath once tasted it, easily contemns all human comforts. Go now, ye worldlings, and insult over our paleness, our neediness, our neglect. Ye could not be so jocund if you were not ignorant ; if you did not want knowledge, you could not overlook him that hath it ; for me, I am so far from emulating you, that I profess I had as lieve be a brute beast, as an ignorant rich man.

What a world of wit is here packed up together ! I know not whether this sight doth more dismay or comfort me ; it dismays me to think, that here is so much that I cannot know ; it comforts me to think that this variety yields so good helps to know what I should.

HENRY PEACHAM, D. 1640.

Affect not, as some do, that bookish ambition, to be stored with books, and have well-furnished libraries, yet keep their heads empty of knowledge. To desire to have many books, and never to use them, is like a child that will have a candle burning by him all the while he is sleeping.

ROBERT BURTON, 1576-1640.

But amongst those exercises or recreations of the mind within doors, there is none so general, so aptly to be applied to all sorts of men, so fit and proper to expel idleness and melancholy, as that of study. So sweet is the delight of study, the more learning they have the more they covet to learn ; the longer they live, the more they are enamored with the Muses.

BALTHASAR BONIFACIUS RHODIGINUS, 1584-1659.

But how can I live here without my books ? I really seem to myself crippled and only half myself ; for if, as the great Orator used to say, arms are a soldier's members, surely books are the limbs of scholars.

CORASIUS.

Of a truth, he who would deprive me of books, my old friends, would take away all the delight of my life, nay, I will even say all desire of living.

LEO ALLATIUS, 1586-1669.

To me, indeed, the light of the sun, the day, and life itself, would be joyless and bitter, if I had not something to read : if I lacked the works of the most illustrious men ; for, in comparison with their preciousness and delight, wealth and pleasure, and all the things that men prize, are mean and trifling.

JAMES SHIRLEY, 1594-1666.

I never knew  
More sweet and happy hours than I employ'd  
Upon my books.

SIR WILLIAM WALLER, 1597-1668.

In my study I am sure to converse with none but wise men ; but abroad it is impossible for me to avoid the society of fools. Here, without travelling so far as Endor, I can call up the ablest spirits of those times, the learnedest philosophers, the wisest counsellors, the greatest generals, and make them serviceable to me.

FRANCESCO DI RIOJA, 1600-1659.

A little peaceful home  
Bounds all my wants and wishes ; add to this  
My book and friend, and this is happiness.

SIR THOMAS BROWNE, 1605-1682.

I envy no man that knows more than myself, but pity them that know less.

THOMAS FULLER, 1608-1661.

When there is no recreation or business for thee abroad, thou may'st have a company of honest old fellows in their leathern jackets in thy study which will find thee excellent divertisement at home.

JOHN MILTON, 1608-1674.

For Books do preserve, as in a violl, the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them. A good Booke is the pretious life-blood of a master spirit, imbalm'd and treasur'd up on purpose to a Life beyond Life.

Who reads

Incessantly, and to his reading brings not  
A spirit and judgment equal or superior,

Uncertain and unsettled still remains ;  
 Deep-versed in books, but shallow in himself.

EARL OF CLARENDON, 1608-1674.

He that doth not think at all upon what he is to do,  
 will never do any thing well ; and he who doth  
 nothing but think, had as good do nothing at all.

SIR MATTHEW HALE, 1609-1676.

I have been acquainted somewhat with men and  
 books, and have had long experience in learning, and  
 in the world. Be diligent in study and in your calling.  
 It will be your wisdom and benefit.

FRANCIS OSBORNE, D. 1659.

A few books well studied, and thoroughly digested,  
 nourish the understanding more than hundreds but  
 gargled in the mouth.

BENJAMIN WHICHCOTE, 1610-1683.

The Improvement of a little Time may be a gain to  
 all Eternity.

A good Booke may be a Benefactor representing  
 God Himself.

SAMUEL SORBIÈRE, 1610-1670.

It is not the quantity but the quality of knowledge  
 which is valuable.

GILLES MÉNAGE, 1613-1692.

The reason why borrowed books are seldom returned,  
 is that it is easier to retain the books themselves than  
 what is inside of them.

DUC DE LA ROCHEFOUCAULD, 1613-1680.

Wisdom is to the mind what health is to the body.

EARL OF BEDFORD, 1613-1700.

Borrow, therefore, of those golden morning hours, and bestow them on your book.

RICHARD BAXTER, 1615-1691.

Good books are a very great mercy to the world. As for play-books, and romances, and idle tales, I have already shewed how pernicious they are, especially to youth, and to frothy, empty, idle wits, that know not what a man is, nor what he hath to do in the world. They are powerful baits of the devil, to keep more necessary things out of their minds, and better books out of their hands, and to poison the mind so much the more dangerously, as they are read with more delight and pleasure : and to fill the minds of sensual people with such idle fumes and intoxicating fancies, as may divert them from serious thoughts.

It is not the reading of many books which is necessary to make a man wise or good ; but the well-reading of a few.

No man having leisure to learn all things, a wise man must be sure to lay hold on that which is most useful.

THOMAS V. BARTHOLIN, 1619-1680.

Without books, God is silent, justice dormant, natural science at a stand, philosophy lame, letters dumb, and all things involved in Cimmerian darkness.

FRANCIS CHARPENTIER, 1620-1702.

I could not help laughing at the expression, though I agree in the sentiment of Heinsius, who with a simple frankness, very natural to a Dutchman, declares, that on reading Plato, he felt so much delight and enthusiasm, that one page of that philosopher's work operated upon him like the intoxication produced by swallowing ten bumpers of wine.

SIR WILLIAM TEMPLE, 1628-1698.

Books, like proverbs, receive their chief value from the stamp and esteem of ages through which they have passed.

ISAAC BARROW, 1630-1677.

Is not Aristotle as renowned for teaching the world with his pen, as Alexander for conquering it with his sword? Is not one far oftener mentioned than the other? Do not men hold themselves much more obliged to the learning of the philosopher, than to the valor of the warrior? He that loveth a book will never want a faithful friend, a wholesome counsellor, a cheerful companion, an effectual comforter. By study, by reading, by thinking, one may innocently divert and pleasantly entertain himself, as in all weathers, so in all fortunes.

The reading of books, what is it but conversing with the wisest men of all ages and all countries, who thereby communicate to us their most deliberate thoughts, choicest notions, and best inventions, couched in good expression, and digested in exact method?

ROBERT SOUTH, 1633-1716.

The pleasure and delight of knowledge and learning

far surpasseth all other in nature. Of knowledge there is no satiety, but satisfaction and appetite are perpetually interchangeable.

He who has published an injurious book, sins, as it were, in his very grave ; corrupts others while he is rotting himself.

JOHN DE LA BRUYÈRE, 1644-1696.

Where a book raises your spirit, and inspires you with noble and courageous feelings, seek for no other rule to judge the event by ; it is good and made by a good workman.

A SEVENTEENTH CENTURY DIVINE.

Consider that there be daily duties to be well performed which do not exclude innocent recreations and the privileged opportunities of silent conversation with the greatest minds and spirits, in their most chosen words, in their books, that lie ready and offer themselves to us if we would.

JEREMY COLLIER, 1650-1726.

By Reading a Man does as it were Antedate his Life, and makes himself contemporary with the Ages past.

In conversing with Books we may chuse our Company, and disengage without Ceremony. Here we are free from the Formalities of Custom : We need not undergo the Penance of a dull Story ; but may shake off the Haughty, the Impertinent, and the Vain, at Pleasure.

Books are a Guide in Youth, and an Entertainment for Age. They support us under Solitude, and keep us from being a Burthen to ourselves. They help us



to forget the Crossness of Men and Things ; compose our Cares, and our Passions ; and lay our Disappointments asleep. When we are weary of the Living, we may repair to the Dead, who have nothing of Peevishness, Pride, or Design, in their Conversation. A Man may as well expect to grow stronger by always Eating, as wiser by always Reading.- 'Tis Thought and Digestion which make Books serviceable, and gives Health and Vigor to the Mind.

CHARLES BLOUNT, 1654-1697.

Men's Natural Abilities, like Natural Plants, need pruning by Study : Thus we see that Histories make Men wise ; Poets, witty ; Mathematicks, subtle ; Natural Philosophy, deep ; Moral Philosophy, grave ; Logick and Rhetorick, able to dispute ; all which Excellencies are to be acquired only from Books ; since no Vocal Learning is so effectual for Instruction, as Reading ; for that written Discourses are better digested, and support themselves better on their own weight, than Words disguised by the manner of Expression, cadence or gesture, which corrupt the simplicity of things ; when also the suddenness of Pronunciation allows not the Audience time sufficient to reflect upon what was said.

Having thus demonstrated how much the World owes to Learning and Books, let me not be altogether unmindful of Faust and Guttenburg, the promoters of both ; who by their Ingenuity discovered and made known to the World, that Profound Art of Printing, which hath made Learning not only Easie but Cheap ; since now, any Person may accommodate himself with a good moderate Library, at the same Price, as heretofore.

fore Plato payed for Three Books of *Philolaus* the *Pythagorean*, viz., Three Hundred Pounds.

JOSEPH ADDISON, 1672-1719.

Books are the legacies that a great genius leaves to mankind, which are delivered down from generation to generation.

Knowledge of books in a man of business is a torch in the hands of one who is willing and able to show those who are bewildered, the way which leads to prosperity and welfare.

ALEXANDER POPE, 1688-1744.

At this day, as much company as I have kept, and as much as I love it, I love reading better.

BARON MONTESQUIEU, 1689-1755.

Love of reading enables a man to exchange the weary hours which come to everyone, for hours of delight.

LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU, 1690-1762.

No entertainment is so cheap as reading, nor any pleasure so lasting.

LORD CHESTERFIELD, 1694-1773.

Throw away none of your time upon those trivial, futile books, published by idle or necessitous authors, for the amusement of idle and ignorant readers : such sort of books swarm and buzz about one every day. Knowledge is like power, in this respect, and those who have the most, are most desirous of having more. It does not cloy by possession, but increases desire ; which is the case with very few pleasures.

MATTHEW GREEN, 1696-1737.

And shorten tedious hours with books.

HENRY FIELDING, 1707-1754.

We are as liable to be corrupted by books as by companions.

SAMUEL JOHNSON, 1709-1784.

A young man should read five hours in the day, and so may acquire a great deal of knowledge.

General principles must be had from books. In conversation you never get a system.

Books that can be held in the hand, and carried to the fireside, are the best after all.

Knowledge is of two kinds. We know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can find information upon it. When we inquire into any subject, the first thing we have to do, is to know what books have treated of it.

DAVID HUME, 1712-1776.

I passed through the ordinary course of education with success, and was seized very early with a passion for literature, which has been the ruling passion of my life, and the great source of my enjoyments.

OLIVER GOLDSMITH, 1728-1774.

The first time I read an excellent book, it is to me just as if I had gained a new friend ; when I read over a book I have perused before, it resembles the meeting with an old one.

WILLIAM DODD, 1729-1777.

Books, dear books,  
Have been, and are my comforts, morn and night,  
Adversity, prosperity, at home,  
Abroad, health, sickness—good or ill report,  
The same firm friends ; the same refreshments rich,  
And source of consolation.

JOHN MOORE, 1730-1802.

The entertainment which BOOKS afford, can be enjoyed in the worst weather, can be varied as we please, obtained in solitude, and instead of blunting, it sharpens the understanding ; but the most valuable effect of a taste for reading is, that it often preserves us from bad company. For those are not apt to go or remain with disagreeable people abroad, who are always certain of a pleasant party at home.

EDWARD GIBBON, 1737-1794.

The love of study, a passion which derives great vigor from enjoyment, supplies each day, each hour, with a perpetual round of independent and rational pleasure.

Let us read with method, and propose to ourselves an end to what our studies may point. The use of reading is to aid us in thinking.

DANIEL WYTTENBACH, 1746-1820.

There is no business, no avocation whatever, which will not permit a man, who has the inclination, to give a little time, every day, to study.

JOHN AIKIN, 1747-1822.

Imagine that we had it in our power to call up the shades of the greatest and wisest men that ever existed, and oblige them to converse with us on the most interesting topics—what an inestimable privilege should we think it!—how superior to all common enjoyments! But in a well-furnished library we, in fact, possess this power. We can question Xenophon and Cæsar on their campaigns, make Demosthenes and Cicero plead before us, join in the audiences of Socrates and Plato, and receive demonstrations from Euclid and Newton.

In books we have the choicest thoughts of the ablest men in their best dress. We can at pleasure exclude dulness and impertinence, and open our doors to wit and good sense alone.

JOHN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE, 1749-1832.

Whoever would do good in the world, ought not to deal in censure. We ought not to destroy, but rather construct.

Every week he (Schiller) was different and more perfect; whenever I saw him he appeared to me to have advanced in reading, learning, and judgment.

TOMAS DE YRIARTE, 1750-1791.

For every man of real learning  
Is anxious to increase his lore,  
And feels, in fact, a greater yearning,  
The more he knows, to know the more.

GEORGE CRABBE, 1754-1832.

This, BOOKS can do ;—nor this alone ; they give  
New views to life, and teach us how to live ;

They soothe the grieved, the stubborn they chastise,  
Fools they admonish, and confirm the wise :  
Their aid they yield to all : they never shun  
The man of sorrow, nor the wretch undone :  
Unlike the hard, the selfish, and the proud,  
They fly not sullen from the suppliant crowd ;  
Nor tell to various people various things,  
But show to subjects, what they show to kings.

GEORGE DYER, 1755-1844.

Libraries are the wardrobes of literature, whence men, properly informed, might bring forth something for ornament, much for curiosity, and more for use.

WILLIAM GODWIN, 1756-1836.

Books are the depository of everything that is most honorable to man. Literature, taken in all its bearings, forms the grand line of demarcation between the human and the animal kingdoms. He that loves reading, has everything within his reach.

He that revels in a well-chosen library, has innumerable dishes, and all of admirable flavor. His taste is rendered so acute, as easily to distinguish the nicest shades of difference. His mind becomes ductile, susceptible to every impression, and gaining new refinement from them all.

SIR S. EGERTON BRYDGES, 1762-1837.

Books instruct us calmly, and without intermingling with their instruction any of those painful impressions of superiority, which we must necessarily feel from a living instructor. They wait the pace of each man's capacity ; stay for his want of perception, without re-

proach ; go backward and forward with him at his wish ; and furnish inexhaustible repetitions. When a man sits in a well-furnished library, surrounded by the collected wisdom of thousands of the best endowed minds, of various ages and countries, what an amazing extent of mental range does he command. Every age, and every language, has some advantages ; some excellencies peculiar to itself ! Above all, there is this value in books, that they enable us to converse with the dead. When a person's body is mouldering, cold and insensible, in the grave, we feel a sacred sentiment of veneration for the living memorials of his mind.

JEAN PAUL F. RICHTER, 1763-1825.

A scholar has no ennui. . . . In this bridal-chamber of the mind (such are our study-chambers), in this concert-hall of the finest voices gathered from all times and places—the æsthetic and philosophic enjoyments almost overpower the faculty of choice.

ISAAC DISRAELI, 1767-1848.

A virtuous writer communicates virtue ; a refined writer, a subtile delicacy ; a sublime writer, an elevation of sentiment. What acute reasoners has the refined penetration of Hume formed ; what amenity of manners has not Addison introduced ; to how many virtuous youths have not the moral essays of Johnson imparted fortitude, and illumined with reflection ?

PHILOSOPHY extends its thoughts on whatever the eye has seen, or the hand has touched ; it herbalizes in fields ; it founds mines ; it is on the waters, and in the forests ; it is in the library, and the laboratory ; it

arranges the calculations of finance ; it invents the police of a city ; it erects its fortifications ; it gives velocity to our fleets ; in a word, it is alike in the solitude of deserts, as in the populousness of manufactories.

Those authors who appear sometimes to forget they are writers, and remember they are men, will be our favorites. He who writes from the heart, will write to the heart.

Readers must not imagine that all the pleasures of composition depend on the author ; for there is something which a reader himself must bring to the book, that the book may please. There is a literary appetite which the author can no more impart, than the most skilful cook can give an appetency to the guests.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, 1770-1850.

Dreams, books, are each a world ; and books, we know,  
Are a substantial world, both pure and good :  
Round these, with tendrils strong as flesh and blood,  
Our pastime and our happiness will grow.

Blessings be with them—and eternal praise,  
Who gave us nobler loves and nobler cares—  
The poets, who on earth have made us heirs  
Of truth and pure delight by heavenly lays !

. . . Books are yours,  
Within whose silent chambers treasure lies  
Preserved from age to age ; more precious far  
Than that accumulated store of gold



And orient gems, which for a day of need,  
The Sultan hides deep in ancestral tombs,  
These hoards of truth you can unlock at will.

CHARLES LAMB, 1775-1834.

What a place to be in is an old library ! It seems as though all the souls of all the writers were reposing here, as in some dormitory, or middle state. I do not want to handle, to profane the leaves, their winding sheets. I could as soon dislodge a shade. I seem to inhale learning, walking amid their foliage.

I own that I am disposed to say grace upon twenty other occasions in the course of the day besides my dinner. I want a form for setting out upon a pleasant walk, for a moonlight ramble, for a friendly meeting, or a solved problem. Why have we none for books, those spiritual repasts—a grace before Milton—a grace before Shakespeare—a devotional exercise proper to be said before reading the Fairy Queen ?

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR, 1775-1864.

We enter our studies, and enjoy a society which we alone can bring together. We raise no jealousy by conversing with one in preference to another ; we give no offence to the most illustrious by questioning him as long as we will, and leaving him as abruptly. Diversity of opinion raises no tumult in our presence ; each interlocutor stands before us, speaks, or is silent, and we adjourn or decide the business at our leisure. Nothing is past which we desire to be present ; and we enjoy by anticipation somewhat like the power

which I imagine we shall possess hereafter of sailing on a wish from world to world.

The writings of the wise are the only riches our posterity cannot squander.

WILLIAM HAZLITT, 1778-1830.

The poet's verse slides into the current of our blood. We read them when young, we remember them when old. We read there of what has happened to others; we feel that it has happened to ourselves.

I do not think altogether the worse of a book for having survived the author a generation or two.

When I take up a work that I have read before (the oftener the better) I know what I have to expect. The satisfaction is not lessened by being anticipated. When the entertainment is altogether new, I sit down to it as I should to a strange dish,—turn and pick out a bit here and there, and am in doubt what to think of the composition. In thus turning to a well-known author, there is not only an assurance that my time will not be thrown away, or my palate nauseated with the most insipid or vilest trash,—but I shake hands with, and look an old, tried, and valued friend in the face,—compare notes, and chat the hours away. In reading a book which is an old favorite with me I not only have the pleasure of imagination and of a critical relish of the work, but the pleasures of memory added to it. It recalls the same feelings and associations which I had in first reading it, and which I can never have again in any other way. Standard productions of this kind are links in the chain of our conscious

being. They bind together the different scattered divisions of our personal identity. They are landmarks and guides in our journey through life.

The greatest pleasure in life is that of reading, and I have had as much of this pleasure as perhaps anyone. I have had more pleasure in reading the adventures of a novel (and perhaps changing situations with the hero) than I ever had in my own.

I remember getting completely wet through one day and stopping at an inn (I think it was at Tewkesbury), where I sat up all night to read *Paul and Virginia*. Sweet were the showers in early youth that drenched my body, and sweet the drops of pity that fell upon the books I read.

By conversing with the *mighty dead*, we imbibe sentiment with knowledge. We become strongly attached to those who can no longer either hurt or serve us, except through the influence which they exert over the mind. We feel the presence of that power which gives immortality to human thoughts and actions, and catch the flame of enthusiasm from all ages and nations.

We wonder that anyone who has read *The History of a Foundling* should labor under an indigestion; nor do we comprehend how a perusal of the *Faery Queen* should not insure to the true believer an uninterrupted succession of halcyon days.

If the stage shows us the masks of men and the pageant of the world, books let us into their souls and lay open to us the secrets of our own. They are the first and last, the most home-felt, the most heart-felt of all our enjoyments!

CHARLES C. COLTON, 1780–1832.

Many books require no thought from those who read them, and for a very simple reason ;—they made no such demand upon those who wrote them. Those works therefore are the most valuable, that set our thinking faculties in the fullest operation.

DR. WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING, 1780–1842.

No matter how poor I am ; no matter though the prosperous of my own time will not enter my obscure dwelling ; if the sacred writers will enter and take up their abode under my roof—if Milton will cross my threshold to sing to me of Paradise ; and Shakespeare to open to me the worlds of imagination and the workings of the human heart,—I shall not pine for want of intellectual companionship, though excluded from what is called the best society in the place where I live.

Select good books, such as have been written by right-minded and strong-minded men, real thinkers ; who, instead of diluting by repetition what others say, have something to say for themselves, and write to give relief to full earnest souls : and these works must not be skimmed over for amusement, but read with fixed attention, and a reverential love of truth.

Let every man, if possible, gather some good books under his roof, and obtain access for himself and family to some social library. Almost any luxury should be sacrificed to this.

A man can now possess himself of the most precious treasures of English literature. Books, once confined to a few by their costliness, are now accessible to the

multitude. The diffusion of these silent teachers, books, through the whole community, is to work greater effects than artillery, machinery, and legislation. Its peaceful agency is to supersede stormy revolutions. The culture, which it is to spread, whilst an unspeakable good to the individual, is also to become the stability of nations.

WASHINGTON IRVING, 1783-1859.

The scholar, only, knows how dear these silent, yet eloquent, companions of pure thoughts and innocent hours become in the season of adversity. When all that is wordly turns to dross around us, these only retain their steady value. When friends grow cold, and the converse of intimates languishes into vapid civility and commonplace, these only continue the unaltered countenance of happier days, and cheer us with that true friendship which never deceived hope nor deserted sorrow.

LEIGH HUNT, 1784-1859.

Sitting last winter among my books, and walled round with all the comfort and protection which they and my fireside could afford me,—to wit, a table of high-piled books at my back, my writing desk on one side of me, some shelves on the other, and the feeling of the warm fire at my feet,—I began to consider how I loved the authors of those books; how I loved them too, not only for the imaginative pleasures they afforded me, but for their making me love the very books themselves, and delight to be in contact with them. I looked sideways at my Spenser, my Theocritus, and my Arabian Nights; then above them at my Italian

Poets ; then behind me at my Dryden and Pope, my Romances, and my Boccaccio ; then on my left side at my Chaucer, who lay on my writing desk ; and thought how natural it was in Charles Lamb to give a kiss to an old folio, as I once saw him do to Chapman's Homer.

How pleasant it is to reflect that the greatest lovers of books have themselves become books ! What better metamorphosis could Pythagoras have desired ! How Ovid and Horace exulted in anticipating theirs ! And how the world has justified their exultation !

This little body of thought that lies before me in the shape of a book has existed thousands of years ; nor since the invention of the press, can any thing short of an universal convulsion of nature abolish it. To a shape like this, so small, yet so comprehensive, so slight, yet so lasting, so insignificant, yet so venerable, turns the mighty activity of Homer, and so turning, is enabled to live and warm us for ever. To a shape like this turns the placid sage of Academus : to a shape like this the grandeur of Milton, the exuberance of Spenser, the pungent elegance of Pope, and the volatility of Prior.

Let the half-witted say what they will of delusions, no thorough reader ever ceased to believe in his books.

#### LOVE PEACOCK, 1785-1866.

It is, as I may say from repeated experience, a pure and unmixed pleasure to have a goodly volume lying before you, and to know that you may open it if you please, and need not open it unless you please.

THOMAS DE QUINCEY, 1786-1859.

At this hour, five hundred years since their creation, the tales of Chaucer, never equaled on this earth for their tenderness, and for life of picturesqueness, are read familiarly by many in the charming language of their natal day, and by others in the modernizations of Dryden, of Pope, and Wordsworth.

At this hour, one thousand eight hundred years since their creation, the Pagan tales of Ovid, never equaled on this earth for the gaiety of their movement and the capricious graces of their narrative, are read by all Christendom.

RICHARD WHATELY, 1787-1863.

If, in reading books, a man does not choose wisely, at any rate he has the chance offered to him of doing so.

LORD BYRON, 1788-1824.

But words are things, and a small drop of ink,  
Falling like dew, upon a thought, produces  
That which makes thousands, perhaps millions, think.

DR. ARNOTT, 1788-1824.

And in a corner of my house I have BOOKS—the miracle of all my possessions, more wonderful than the wishing-cap of the Arabian tales, for they transport me instantly, not only to all places, but to all times. By my books I can conjure up before me to a momentary existence many of the great and good men of past ages, and for my individual satisfaction they seem to act again the most renowned of their achievements; the orators declaim for me, the historians recite, the poets sing.

## ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER, 1788-1860.

Nine-tenths of our current literature has no other end but to inveigle a thaler or two out of the public pocket, for which purpose author, publisher, and printer, are leagued together.

## SIR JOHN HERSCHEL, 1792-1871.

Now, of all the amusements which can possibly be imagined for a hard-working man, after his daily toil, or in its intervals, there is nothing like reading an entertaining book. It calls for no bodily exertion. It relieves his home of its dulness and sameness. It transports him into a livelier, and gayer, and more diversified and interesting scene, and while he enjoys himself there he may forget the evils of the present moment. Nay, it accompanies him to his next day's work, and if the book he has been reading be anything above the very idlest and lightest, gives him something to think of besides the mere mechanical drudgery of his everyday occupation,—something he can enjoy while absent, and look forward with pleasure to return to.

The novel, in its best form, I regard as one of the most powerful engines of civilization ever invented. Those who have once experienced the enjoyment of such works will not easily learn to abstain from reading, and will not willingly descend to an inferior grade of intellectual privilege.

## JULIUS C. HARE, 1795-1855.

For my own part, I have ever gained the most profit, and the most pleasure also, from the books which have made me think the most. Above all, in the present



age of light reading, that is of reading hastily, thoughtlessly, indiscriminately, it is well if something heavier is cast now and then into the midst of the literary public. This may scare and repel the weak, it will rouse and attract the stronger, and increase their strength, by making them exert it. In the sweat of the brow, is the mind as well as the body to eat its bread.

Desultory reading is indeed very mischievous, by fostering habits of loose, discontinuous thought, by turning the memory into a common sewer for rubbish of all thoughts to float through, and by relaxing the power of attention, which of all our faculties most needs care, and is most improved by it.

THOMAS CARLYLE, 1795-1881.

May blessings be upon the head of Cadmus, the Phœnicians, or whoever it was that invented books !

No book that will not improve by repeated readings deserves to be read at all.

No book, I believe, except the Bible, has been so universally read and loved by Christians of all tongues and sects as Thomas à Kempis' "De Imitatione Christi."

Certainly the Art of Writing is the most miraculous of all things man has devised. In Books lies the *soul* of the whole Past Time ; the articulate audible voice of the Past, when the body and material substance of it has altogether vanished like a dream. All that mankind has done, thought, gained, or been ; it is lying as in magic preservation in the pages of Books.

Do not Books still accomplish *miracles* as *Runes* were fabled to do? They persuade men. Not the wretchedest circulating-library novel, which foolish girls thumb and con in remote villages, but will help to regulate the actual practical weddings and households of those foolish girls. What built St. Paul's Cathedral? Look at the heart of the matter, it was that divine Hebrew Book,—the word partly of the man Moses, an outlaw tending his Midianitish herds, four thousand years ago, in the wilderness of Sinai! It is the strangest of things, yet nothing is truer. With the Art of Writing, of which Printing is a simple, an inevitable and comparatively insignificant corollary, the true reign of miracles for mankind commenced.

The true University of these days is a Collection of Books.

Of the things which man can do or make here below, by far the most momentous, wonderful, and worthy, are the things we call Books! Those poor bits of rag-paper with black ink on them;—from the Daily Newspaper to the sacred Hebrew Book, what have they not done, what are they not doing?

If a book come from the heart, it will contrive to reach other hearts; all art and authorcraft are of small account to that.

Learn to be good readers,—which is perhaps a more difficult thing than you imagine. Learn to be discriminative in your reading; to read faithfully, and with your best attention, all kinds of things which you

have a real interest in, a real not an imaginary, and which you find to be really fit for what you are engaged in.

A. BRONSON ALCOTT, B. 1799, D. 1888.

Good books, like good friends, are few and chosen ; the more select the more enjoyable.

Next to a friend's discourse, no morsel is more delicious than a ripe book, a book whose flavor is as refreshing at the thousandth tasting as at the first.

Without Plutarch, no library were complete. Can we marvel at his fame, or overestimate the surpassing merits of his writings ? It seems as I read as if none before, none since, had written lives, as if he alone were entitled to the name of biographer.

Montaigne also comes in for a large share of the scholar's regard. Opened anywhere, his page is sensible, marrowy, quotable. He seems almost the only author whose success warrants in every stroke of his pen his right to guide it. Everywhere his page is alive and rewarding, and we are disappointed at finding his book comes to an end like other books.

One cannot celebrate books sufficiently. After saying his best, still something better remains to be spoken in their praise. As with friends, one finds new beauties at every interview, and would stay long in the presence of those choice companions.

ROBERT CHAMBERS, 1802-1871.

There are the Waverley Novels ! To how many thousands upon thousands has life been made less

painful or more delightful by these charming tales! The world would have gone on without them, no doubt, but it would not have gone on so agreeably. There would have been an infinite deal less happiness in it during the last twenty-five years, if they had not been written.

Cowper's Task is as good as an estate to every reading-man in the kingdom.

There are some of Burns' songs, the loss of which, if it were possible, would be to me more deplorable, as far as I am personally concerned, than the total repeal of the Habeas Corpus Act.

There are some books usually read in youth, and without which youth would not be what it is. Of these are Robinson Crusoe and Gulliver. How youth passed long ago, when there was no Crusoe to waft it away in fancy to the Pacific, and fix it upon the lonely doings of the shipwrecked mariner, is inconceivable; but we can readily suppose that it must have been essentially different. . . . Altogether, it is a glorious book, and one to which we cannot well show enough of respect.

Pope, that prince of sayers of acute and exquisite things—that most mellifluous of all the rhetorical class of poets amongst whom he flourished. He was a fine spirit and a great poet, and English literature would show a mighty blank indeed were he taken out of it.

Dryden is even better than Pope. He has immense masculine energies. There is a lashing strength about his verse that no other writer approaches. Few know

what a treasure of thought and expression lies in his Hind and Panther, and Fables. We are apt, in the large attention we pay to modern literature, to set down him and Pope in our minds as scarcely poets at all, or at the best, good versifiers ; but when we open their works, and actually read them, we cease to wonder that our fathers and grandfathers talked of these men as something only a little lower than the gods.

A congenial book can be taken up by any lover of books, with the certainty of its transporting the reader within a few minutes to a region immeasurably removed from that which he desires to quit. . . . Books are the blessed chloroform of the mind. We wonder how folks in trouble did without them in old time.

I have cause to revere the name of Defoe, who reached his hand down through a century and a half to wipe away bitter tears from my childish eyes. The going back to school was always a dreadful woe to me, casting its black shadow far into the latter part of my brief holidays. I have had my share of suffering and sorrow since, like other men, but I have seldom felt so absolutely wretched as when, a little boy, I was about to exchange my pleasant home-life for the hardships and uncongenialities of school. . . . And yet, I protest, I had but to take up *Robinson Crusoe*, and in a very few minutes I was out of all thought of the approaching calamity. . . . I had travelled over a thousand leagues of sea ; I was in my snug, well-fortified cave, with the ladder upon the right side of it, " so that neither man nor beast could get at me,"

with my half-a-dozen muskets loaded, and my powder distributed in separate parcels, so that not even a thunderbolt should do me any irreparable injury. Or, if not quite so secure, I was visiting my summer plantation among my goats and corn, or shooting, in the still astonished woods, birds of marvelous beauty; or lying upon my stomach upon the top of the hill, watching through my spy-glass the savages putting to sea, and not displeased to find myself once more alone in my own little island.

During that agonizing period which intervened between my proposal of marriage by letter to Jemima Anne, and my reception of her reply, how should I ever have kept myself alive, save for the chivalrous aid of the Black Knight in *Ivanhoe*. To him, mainly, assisted by Rebecca, and (I am bound to say) by that scoundrel Brian de Bois Guilbert, are my obligations due, that I did not—through the extremities of despair and hope, suffered during that interval—become a drivelling idiot.

When her answer did arrive—in the negative—what was it which preserved me from the noose, the razor, or the stream, but Mr. Carlyle's *French Revolution!* In the woes of poor Louis Capet, I forgot my own. . . . Who, having a grateful heart, can forget these things, or deny the Blessedness of Books?

ALEXANDER (LORD CHIEF JUSTICE) COCKBURN,  
1802–1880.

Happy is he who, when the day's work is done, finds his rest, and solace, and recreation in communion with the master minds of the present and of the past—

in study, in literature, and the enjoyment of pleasures which are to be derived from this source. There is no rest, no recreation, no refreshment to the wearied and jaded body and mind, worn by work and toil, equal to the intellectual pleasures to which I have just been referring.

LORD LYTTON (E. L. BULWER), 1803-1873.

I have known some people in great sorrow fly to a novel, or the last light book in fashion. One might as well take a rose-draught for the plague! Light reading does not do when the heart is really heavy. I am told that Goethe, when he lost his son, took to study a science that was new to him. Ah! Goethe was a physician who knew what he was about. In a great grief like that, you cannot tickle and divert the mind; you must wrench it away, abstract, absorb—bury it in an abyss, hurry it into a labyrinth.

There is Homer, now lost with the gods, now at home with the homeliest, the very “poet of circumstance,” as Gray has finely called him; and yet with imagination enough to seduce and coax the dullest into forgetting, for a while, that little spot on his desk which his banker’s book can cover.

Virgil has genius enough to be two men—to lead you into the fields, not only to listen to the pastoral reed, and to hear the bees hum, but to note how you can make the most of the glebe and the vineyard.

There is Horace, charming man of the world, who will condole with you feelingly on the loss of your fortune, and by no means undervalue the good things of

this life ; but who will yet show you that a man may be happy with a *vile modicum* or *parva rura*.

There is Shakespeare, who, above all poets, is the mysterious dual of hard sense and empyreal fancy—and a great many more, whom I need not name ; but who, if you take to them gently and quietly, will not, like your mere philosopher, your unreasonable stoic, tell you that you have lost nothing ; but who will insensibly steal you out of this world, with its losses and crosses, and slip you into another world, before you know where you are !—a world where you are just as welcome, though you carry no more earth of your lost acres with you than covers the sole of your shoes.

I remember to have cured a disconsolate widower, who obstinately refused every other medicament, by a strict course of geology. I dipped him deep into gneiss and mica schist. Amidst the first strata, I suffered the watery action to expend itself upon cooling crystallized masses ; and, by the time I had got him into the tertiary period, amongst the transition chalks of Maestricht, and the conchiferous marks of Gosau, he was ready for a new wife. Kitty, my dear ! it is no laughing matter. I made no less notable a cure of a young scholar at Cambridge, who was meant for the church, when he suddenly caught a cold fit of freethinking, with great shiverings, from wading out of his depth in Spinosia. None of the divines, whom I first tried, did him the least good in that state ; so I turned over a new leaf, and doctored him gently upon the chapters of faith in Abraham Tucker's book, (you should read it, Sisty ;) then I threw in strong doses of



Fichte ; after that I put him on the Scotch metaphysicians, with plunge-baths into certain German transcendentalists ; and having convinced him that faith is not an unphilosophical state of mind, and that he might believe without compromising his understanding—for he was mightily conceited on that score—I threw in my divines, which he was now fit to digest ; and his theological constitution, since then, has become so robust, that he has eaten up two livings and a deanery !

When some one sorrow, that is yet reparable, gets hold of your mind like a monomania—when you think, because heaven has denied you this or that, on which you had set your heart, that all your life must be a blank—oh ! then diet yourself well on biography—the biography of good and great men. See how little a space one sorrow really makes in life. See scarce a page, perhaps, given to some grief similar to your own ; and how triumphantly the life sails on beyond it ! You thought the wing was broken ! Tut—tut—it was but a bruised feather ! See what life leaves behind it when all is done !—a summary of positive facts far out of the region of sorrow and suffering, linking themselves with the being of the world ! Yes, biography is the medicine here !

Who of us can tell

What he had been, had Cadmus never taught  
The art that fixes into form the thought—  
Had Plato never spoken from his cell,  
Or his high harp blind Homer never strung ?

RALPH WALDO EMERSON, 1803–1882.

Go with mean people, and you think life is mean.

Then read Plutarch, and the world is a proud place, peopled with men of positive quality, with heroes and demigods standing around us, who will not let us sleep. Whenever any skeptic or bigot claims to be heard on the questions of intellect and morals, we ask if he is familiar with the books of Plato, where all his pert objections have once for all been disposed of. If not, he has no right to our time. Let him go and find himself answered there.

In a library we are surrounded by many hundreds of dear friends, but they are imprisoned by an enchanter in these paper and leathern boxes; and though they know us, and have been waiting two, ten, or twenty centuries for us,—some of them,—and are eager to give us a sign, and unbosom themselves, it is the law of their limbo that they must not speak until spoken to; and as the enchanter has dressed them, like battalions of infantry, in coat and jacket of one cut, by the thousand and ten thousand, your chance of hitting on the right one is to be computed by the arithmetical rule of Permutation and Combination,—not a choice out of three caskets, but out of half a million caskets all alike. But it happens, in our experience, that in this lottery there are at least fifty or a hundred blanks to a prize. It seems, then, as if some charitable soul, after losing a great deal of time among the false books, and alighting upon a few true ones which made him happy and wise, would do a right act in naming those which have been bridges or ships to carry him safely over dark morasses and barren oceans, into the heart of sacred cities, into palaces and temples.

Original power is usually accompanied with assimi-

lating power, and we value in Coleridge his excellent knowledge and quotations perhaps as much, possibly more, than his original suggestions.

Next to the originator of a good sentence is the first quoter of it. Many will read the book before one thinks of quoting a passage. As soon as he has done this, that line will be quoted east and west.

When Shakespeare is charged with debts to his authors, Landor replies : " Yet he was more original than his originals. He breathed upon dead bodies and brought them into life."

Wordsworth, as soon as he heard a good thing, caught it up, meditated upon it, and very soon reproduced it in his conversation and writing. If De Quincey said, " That is what I told you," he replied, " No ; that is mine—mine, and not yours." On the whole, we like the valor of it. 'Tis on Marmontel's principle, " I pounce on what is mine, wherever I find it ;" and on Bacon's broader rule, " I take all knowledge to be my province." It betrays the consciousness that truth is the property of no individual, but is the treasure of all men.

Whoever expresses to us a just thought makes ridiculous the pains of the critic who should tell him where such a word had been said before, " It is no more according to Plato than according to me." But the moment there is the purpose of display, the fraud is exposed. In fact, it is as difficult to appropriate the thoughts of others, as it is to invent. Always some

steep transition, some sudden alteration of temperature, of point of view, betrays the foreign interpolation.

The profit of books is according to the sensibility of the reader. The profoundest thought or passion sleeps as in a mine, until an equal mind and heart finds and publishes it.

Many times the reading of a book has made the fortune of the man,—has decided his way of life. It makes friends. 'Tis the tie between men to have been delighted with the same book. Every one of us is always in search of his friend ; and when, unexpectedly, he finds a stranger enjoying the rare poet or thinker who is dear to his own solitude, it is like finding a brother.

Put the duty of being read invariably on the author. If he is not read, whose fault is it ? I am quite ready to be charmed, but I shall not make believe I am charmed.

Let us not forget the genial miraculous force we have known to proceed from a book. We go musing into the vault of day and night ; no constellation shines, no muse descends, the stars are white points, the roses brick-colored dust, the frogs pipe, mice peep, and wagons creak along the road. We return to the house and take up Plutarch or Augustine, and read a few sentences or pages, and lo ! the air swims with life ; the front of heaven is full of fiery shapes ; secrets of magnanimity and grandeur invite us on every hand ; life is made up of them. Such is our debt to a book.

## RICHARD COBDEN, 1804-1865.

I have seen many phases of society, I have had many excited means of occupation, and of gratification ; but I tell you honestly and conscientiously, that the purest pleasures I have ever known are those accessible to you all ; it is in the calm intercourse with intelligent minds, and in the communion with the departed great, through books, by our own firesides.

## FREDERICK DENISON MAURICE, 1805-1872.

That is the test to which I have urged that all books must at last be brought : if they do not bear it their doom is fixed. They may be light or heavy, the penny sheet, or the vast folio ; they may speak of things seen or unseen ; of Science or Art ; of what has been, or what is to be ; they may amuse us, weary us, flatter us, or scorn us ; if they do not assist to make us better or more substantial men, they are only providing fuel for a fire larger and more utterly destructive than that which consumed the library of the Ptolemies.

## SAMUEL PALMER (ARTIST), 1805-1881.

There is nothing like books. Of all things sold incomparably the cheapest ; of all pleasures the least palling : they take up little room, keep quiet when they are not wanted, and, when taken up, bring us face to face with the choicest men who have ever lived, at their choicest moments.

As my walking companion in the country I was so un-English as, on the whole, to prefer my pocket Milton, which I carried for twenty years, to the not un-

beloved bull-terrier "Trimmer," who accompanied me for five: for Milton never fidgeted, frightened horses, ran after sheep, or got run over by a goods-van.

LORD BEACONSFIELD (BENJAMIN DISRAELI),  
1805-1881.

Knowledge is like the mystic ladder in the patriarch's dream. Its base rests on the primeval earth—its crest is lost in the shadowy splendor of the empyrean; while the great authors who for traditionary ages have held the chain of science and philosophy, of poesy and erudition, are the angels ascending and descending the sacred scale, and maintaining, as it were, the communication between man and heaven.

It is certainly not too much to maintain that the exploits of Homer, Aristotle, Dante, or my Lord Bacon, were as considerable events as anything that occurred at Actium, Lepanto, or Blenheim. A Book may be as great a thing as a Battle, and there are systems of Philosophy that have produced as great revolutions as any that have disturbed the social and political existence of our centuries.

GEORGE S. HILLARD (AMERICAN JURIST AND  
AUTHOR), B. 1808.

Books are the friends of the friendless, and a library is the home of the homeless. A taste for reading will always carry you into the best possible society, and enable you to converse with men who will instruct you by their wisdom, and charm you by their wit; who will soothe you when fretted, refresh you when weary, counsel you when perplexed, and sympathize with you at all times.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING, 1809–1861.

Mark, there. We get no good  
By being ungenerous, even to a book,  
And calculating profits,—so much help  
By so much reading. It is rather when  
We gloriously forget ourselves and plunge  
Soul-forward, headlong, into a book's profound,  
Impassioned for its beauty and salt of truth—  
'Tis then we get the right good from a book.

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES, B. 1809, D. 1894.

I like books, I was born and bred among them, and  
have the easy feeling, when I get into their presence,  
that a stable-boy has among horses.

When *I* want a book, it is as a tiger wants a sheep.  
I must have it with one spring, and, if I miss it, go  
away defeated and hungry. And my experience with  
public libraries is that the first volume of the book I  
inquire for is out, unless I happen to want the second,  
when *that* is out.

Every library should try to be complete on something,  
if it were only on the history of pin-heads. I don't  
mean that I buy all the trashy compilations on my  
special subjects, but I try to have all the works of any  
real importance relating to them, old as well as new.

THEODORE PARKER, 1810–1860.

What a joy is there in a good book, writ by some  
great master of thought, who breaks into beauty, as in  
summer the meadow into grass and dandelions and  
violets!

The books which help you most are those which make you think the most. The hardest way of learning is by easy reading. But a great book that comes from a great thinker,—it is a ship of thought, deep freighted with truth, with beauty too.

JOHN BRIGHT, B. 1811, D. 1889.

I would prefer to have one comfortable room well stocked with books to all you can give me in the way of decoration which the highest art can supply.

My own impression is that there is no greater blessing that can be given to an artisan's family than a love of books. The home influence of such a possession is one which will guard them from many temptations and from many evils.

LORD SHERBROOKE (ROBERT LOWE), B. 1811.

There is no pleasure so cheap, so innocent, and so remunerative as the real, hearty pleasure and taste for reading. It does not come to everyone naturally, but I advise you to cultivate it, and endeavor to promote it in your minds.

FRANCIS BENNOCH, B. 1812.

I love my books ! they are companions dear,  
Sterling in worth, in friendship most sincere ;  
Here talk I with the wise in ages gone,  
And with the nobly gifted of our own :  
If love, joy, laughter, sorrow please my mind,  
Love, joy, grief, laughter in my books I find.



GEORGE GILFILLAN, 1813-1878.

We hold that, if a book be worth reading once, it is worth reading twice, and that if it stands a second reading, it may stand a third. This, indeed, is one great test of the excellence of books. Many books require to be read more than once, in order to be seen in their proper colors and latent glories.

HENRY WARD BEECHER, 1813-1888.

Books are not made for furniture, but there is nothing else that so beautifully furnishes a house. The plainest row of books that cloth or paper ever covered is more significant of refinement than the most elaborately carved *étagère* or sideboard.

Books are the windows through which the soul looks out. A home without books is like a room without windows. No man has a right to bring up his children without surrounding them with books, if he has the means to buy them. It is a wrong to his family. He cheats them! Children learn to read by being in the presence of books. The love of knowledge comes with reading and grows upon it. And the love of knowledge, in a young mind, is almost a warrant against the inferior excitement of passions and vices.

Let us congratulate the poor that, in our day, books are so cheap that a man may every year add a hundred volumes to his library for the price which his tobacco and his beer would cost him. A little library, growing larger every year, is an honorable part of a man's history. It is a man's duty to have books. A library is not a luxury, but one of the necessaries of life.

ANTHONY TROLLOPE, 1815-1882.

This habit of reading, I make bold to tell you, is your pass to the greatest, the purest, and the most perfect pleasures that God has prepared for his creatures. Other pleasures may be more ecstatic ; but the habit of reading is the only enjoyment I know, in which there is no alloy. It lasts when all other pleasures fade. It will be there to support you when all other recreations are gone.

GEORGE SEARLE PHILLIPS (JANUARY SEARLE), B.  
about 1816.

Amongst the many things we have to be thankful for, as the result of modern discoveries, surely this of printed books is the highest of all ; and I for one, am so sensible of its merits that I never think of the name of Gutenberg without feelings of veneration and homage.

If an author be worth anything, he is worth bottoming. It may be all very well to skim milk, for the cream lies on the top ; but who could skim Lord Bacon ?

Read only the bravest and noblest books ; books forged at the heart and fashioned by the intellect of a godlike man.

I am not, however, for any Monkish exclusion of men from the world in their study of books ; for the end of all study is *action*.

Books should be our constant companions, for they stimulate thought, and hold a man to his purpose.

FREDERICK WILLIAM ROBERTSON, 1816-1853.

Hundreds of books read once have passed as completely from us as if we had never read them ; whereas the discipline of mind got by writing down, not copying, an abstract of a book which is worth the trouble, fixes it on the mind for years, and, besides, enables one to read other books with more attention and more profit.

JOHN G. SAXE, B. 1816.

Ah ! well I love these books of mine  
 That stand so trimly on their shelves,  
 With here and there a broken line,  
 (Fat "quartos" jostling modest "twelves.")  
 A curious company I own ;  
 The poorest ranking with their betters,  
 In brief—a thing almost unknown,  
 A pure Democracy—of Letters.

If I have favorites here and there,  
 And, like a monarch, pick and choose,  
 I never meet an angry stare  
 That this I take, and that refuse ;  
 No discords rise my soul to vex  
 Among these peaceful book relations,  
 No envious strife of age or sex  
 To mar my quiet lucubrations.

ARTHUR HELPS, 1817-1875.

If I were to look round these shelves, what a host of well-loved names would rise up, in those who have said brave or wise words to comfort and aid their brethren in adversity. It seems as if little remained to be said ;

but in truth there is always waste land in the human heart to be tilled.

In any work that is worth carefully reading, there is generally something that is worth remembering accurately. A man whose mind is enriched with the best sayings of his own country, is a more independent man, walks the streets in a town, or the lanes in the country, with far more delight than he otherwise would have ; and is taught by wise observers of man and nature, to examine for himself. Sancho Panza with his proverbs is a great deal better than he would have been without them.

CHARLES KINGSLEY, 1819–1875.

Except a living man, there is nothing more wonderful than a book !—a message to us from the dead— from human souls whom we never saw, who lived, perhaps, thousands of miles away ; and yet these, on those little sheets of paper, speak to us, amuse us, vivify us, teach us, comfort us, open their hearts to us as brothers.

JOHN RUSKIN, B. 1819, D. 1900.

Life being very short, and the quiet hours of it few, we ought to waste none of them in reading valueless books ; and valuable books should, in a civilized country, be within the reach of everyone, printed in excellent form, for a just price ; but not in any vile, vulgar, or, by reason of smallness of type, physically injurious form, at a vile price. For we none of us need many books, and those which we need ought to be clearly printed, on the best paper, and strongly bound.

Meantime, there is a society continually open to us, of people who will talk to us as long as we like, whatever our rank or occupation ;—talk to us in the best words they can choose, and with thanks if we listen to them. And this society, because it is so numerous and so gentle,—and can be kept waiting round for us all day long, not to grant audience, but to gain it ;—kings and statesmen lingering patiently in those plainly furnished and narrow ante-rooms, our book-case shelves,—we make no account of that company,—perhaps never listen to a word they would say, all day long ! Will you go and gossip with your house-maid, or your stable-boy, when you may talk with queens and kings ; all the while this eternal court is open to you, with its society wide as the world, multitudinous as its days, the chosen, and the mighty, of every place and time ? Into that you may enter always ; in that you may take fellowship and rank according to your wish ; from that, once entered into it, you can never be outcast but by your own fault.

If a book is worth reading, it is worth buying. No book is worth anything which is not worth *much* ; nor is it serviceable until it has been read, and re-read, and loved, and loved again ; and marked, so that you can refer to the passages you want in it, as a soldier can seize the weapon he needs in an armory, or a housewife bring the spice she needs from her store. Bread of flour is good ; but there is bread, sweet as honey, if we would eat it, in a good book ; and the family must be poor indeed which once in their lives, cannot, for such multipliable barley-loaves, pay their baker's bill. We call ourselves a rich nation, and we are filthy and

foolish enough to thumb each other's books out of circulating libraries !

I cannot, of course, suggest the choice of your library to you, every several mind needs different books ; but there are some books which we all need, and assuredly, if you read Homer, Plato, Æschylus, Herodotus, Dante, Shakespeare, and Spenser, as much as you ought, you will not require wide enlargement of shelves to right and left of them for purposes of perpetual study.

In general, the more you can restrain your serious reading to reflective or lyric poetry, history, and natural history. avoiding fiction and the drama, the healthier your mind will become. Of modern poetry keep to Scott, Wordsworth, Keats, Crabbe, Tennyson, the two Brownings, Lowell, Longfellow, and Coventry Patmore, whose "Angel in the House" is a most finished piece of writing, and the sweetest analysis we possess of quiet modern domestic feeling ; while Mrs. Browning's "Aurora Leigh" is, as far as I know, the greatest poem which the century has produced in any language.

ELIZA COOK, B. 1818.

Books ! ye are " Things of Beauty," fair indeed ;  
 Ye gild with waneless lustre homely shelves.  
 Ye have brought unction balm in many a need,  
 Deftly and softly as Titania's elves.

Some heavy thought has often lost its weight  
 When " Robie Burns " has come to share the hour,  
 Crooning his rhymes till the soul grows elate  
 With deep responses to his minstrel power.

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL, B. 1819.

Whatever I love, my delight amounts to an extravagance. There are verses which I cannot read without tears of exultation. Those simple touches scattered here and there, by all great writers, which make me feel that I, and every most despised and out-cast child of God that breathes, have a common humanity with those glorious spirits, overpower me. Poetry has a key which unlocks some more inward cabinet of my nature than is accessible to any other power. Often the mere rhyme, the cadence and sound of the words, awaken this strange feeling in me. Not only do all the happy associations of my early life, that before lay scattered, take beautiful shapes, like iron dust at the approach of the magnet; but something dim and vague beyond these, moves itself in me with the uncertain sound of a far-off sea.

I have been the bosom friend of Leander and Romeo. I seem to go behind Musæus and Shakespeare, and to get my intelligence at first hand. Sometimes in my sorrow, a line from Spenser steals in upon my memory as if by some vitality and external volition of its own, like a blast from the distant trump of a knight pricking towards the court of Faerie, and I am straightway lifted out of that sadness and shadow into the sunshine of a previous and long-agone experience.

WALT WHITMAN, B. 1819, D. 1892.

All the best experience of humanity, folded, saved, freighted to us here! Some of these tiny ships we call Old and New Testament, Homer, Æschylus, Plato, Juvenal, etc. Precious minims! I think, if we were

forced to choose, rather than have you, and the likes of you, and what belongs to, and has grown of you, blotted out and gone, we could better afford, appalling as that would be, to lose all actual ships, this day fastened by wharf, or floating on wave, and see them, with all their cargoes, scuttled and sent to the bottom.

For us, along the great highways of time, those monuments stand—those forms of majesty and beauty. For us those beacons burn through all the nights. Unknown Egyptians, graving hieroglyphs; Hindus, with hymn and apothegm and endless epic; Hebrew prophet, with spirituality, as in flashes of lightning, conscience, like red-hot iron, plaintive songs and screams of vengeance for tyrannies and enslavement; Christ, with bent head, brooding love and peace, like a dove; Greek, creating eternal shapes of physical and esthetic proportion; Roman, lord of satire, the sword, and the codex;—of the figures, some far-off and veiled, others nearer and visible; Dante, stalking with lean form, nothing but fibre, not a grain of superfluous flesh; Angelo, and the great painters, architects, musicians; rich Shakespeare, luxuriant as the sun, artist and singer of Feudalism in its sunset, with all the gorgeous colors, owner thereof, and using them at will;—and so to such as German Kant and Hegel, where they, though near us, leaping over the ages, sit again, impassive, imperturbable, like the Egyptian gods. Of these, and the like of these, is it too much, indeed, to return to our favorite figure, and to view them as orbs and systems of orbs, moving in free paths in the spaces of that other heaven, the kosmic intellect, the soul?



The process of reading is not a half-sleep, but in highest sense, an exercise, a gymnast's struggle ; that the reader is to do something for himself, must be on the alert, must himself or herself construct indeed the poem, argument, history, metaphysical essay—the text furnishing the hints, the clue, the start or framework.

I cannot dismiss English, or British imaginative literature without the cheerful name of Walter Scott. In my opinion he deserves to stand next to Shakespeare.

GEORGE DAWSON, 1821–1876.

The great consulting room of a wise man is a library. When I am in perplexity about life, I have but to come here, and, without fee or reward, I commune with the wisest souls that God has blest the world with. If I want a discourse on immortality Plato comes to my help. If I want to know the human heart Shakespeare opens all its chambers. Whatever be my perplexity or doubt I know exactly the great man to call to me, and he comes in the kindest way, he listens to my doubts and tells me his convictions. Man has no amusement more innocent, more sweet, more gracious, more elevating, and more fortifying than he can find in a library.

CHARLES BUXTON, 1822–1871.

Readers abuse writers and say their writing is wretched stuff, stale nonsense, and so on. But what might not writers justly say of their readers? What poor, dull, indolent, feeble, careless minds do they bring to deal with thoughts whose excellence lies deep!

We are richer than we think. And now and then it is not a bad thing to make a catalogue raisonné of the things that are helping to make us happy. It is astonishing how long the list is! The poorest of us has property, the value of which is almost boundless; but there is not one of us who might not so till that property as to make it yield tenfold more. Our books, gardens, families, society, friends, talk, music, art, poetry, scenery, might all bring forth to us far greater wealth of enjoyment and improvement if we tried to squeeze the very utmost out of them.

J. A. LANGFORD, B. 1823.

The love of books is a love which requires neither justification, apology, nor defence. It is a good thing in itself: a possession to be thankful for, to rejoice over, to be proud of, and to sing praises for. With this love in his heart no man is ever poor, ever without friends, or the means of making his life lovely, beautiful, and happy.

No possession can surpass, or even equal, a good library to the lover of books. Here are treasured up for his daily use and delectation riches which increase by being consumed, and pleasures which never cloy. It is a realm as large as the universe, every part of which is peopled by spirits who lay before his feet their precious spoils as his lawful tribute. For him the poets sing, the philosophers discourse, the historians unfold the wonderful march of life, and the searchers of nature reveal the secrets and mysteries of creation. No matter what his rank or position may be, the lover

of books is the richest and the happiest of the children of men.

ROBERT COLLYER, B. 1823.

I could not go home for the Christmas of 1839, and was feeling very sad about it all, for I was only a boy; and sitting by the fire, an old farmer came in and said: "I notice thou's fond o' reading, so I brought thee summat to read." It was Irving's "Sketch Book." I had never heard of the work. I went at it, and was "as them that dream." No such delight had touched me since the old days of Crusoe. I saw the Hudson and the Catskills, took poor Rip at once into my heart, as everybody has, pitied Ichabod while I laughed at him, thought the old Dutch feast a most admirable thing, and long before I was through, all regret at my lost Christmas had gone down the wind, and I had found out there are books and books. That vast hunger to read never left me. If there was no candle, I poked my head down to the fire; read while I was eating, blowing the bellows, or walking from one place to another. I could read and walk four miles an hour. The world centred in books.

JAMES HAIN FRISWELL, 1827-1878.

And when a man is at home and happy with a book, sitting by his fireside, he must be a churl if he does not communicate that happiness. Let him read now and then to his wife and children. Those thoughts will grow and take root in the hearts of the listeners. A man who feels sympathy with what is good and noble is, at the time he feels that sympathy, good and noble himself.

To a poor man book-love is not only a consoling preservative, but often a source of happiness, power, and wealth. It lifts him from the mechanical drudgery of the day. It takes him away from bad companions, and gives him the close companionship of a good and fine-thinking man ; for, while he is reading Bacon or Shakespeare, he is talking with Bacon or Shakespeare. While his body is resting, his mind is working and growing.

ALEXANDER SMITH, 1830-1867.

Books are the true Elysian fields where the spirits of the dead converse, and into these fields a mortal may venture unappalled. What king's court can boast such company ? What school of philosophy such wisdom ? The wit of the ancient world is glancing and flashing there. There is Pan's pipe, there are the songs of Apollo. Seated in my library at night, and looking on the silent faces of my books, I am occasionally visited by a strange sense of the supernatural. They are not collections of printed pages, they are ghosts. I take one down and it speaks with me in a tongue not now heard on earth, and of men and things of which it alone possesses knowledge.

Every sentence of the great writer is like an autograph. There is no chance of mistaking Milton's large utterance, or Jeremy Taylor's images, or Sir Thomas Browne's quaintness, or Charles Lamb's cunning turns of sentence. If Milton had endorsed a bill with half-a-dozen blank verse lines, it would be as good as his name, and would be accepted as good evidence in court. If Lamb had never gathered up

his essays into those charming volumes, he could be tracked easily by the critical eye through all the magazines of his time. The identity of these men can never be mistaken. Every printed page of theirs is like a coat of arms, every trivial note on ordinary business like the impression of a signet ring.

FREDERIC HARRISON, B. 1831.

Now, to stuff our minds with what is simply trivial, simply curious, or that which at best has but a low nutritive power, this is to close our minds to what is solid and enlarging, and spiritually sustaining. Whether our neglect of the great books comes from our not reading at all, or from an incorrigible habit of reading the little books, it ends in just the same thing. And that thing is ignorance of all the greater literature of the world.

The immortal and universal poets of our race are to be read and re-read till their music and their spirit are a part of our nature ; they are to be thought over and digested till we live in the world they created for us ; they are to be read devoutly, as devout men read their Bible and fortify their heart with psalms.

EARL LYTTON (OWEN MEREDITH), B. 1831, D. 1891.

It is, however, not to the museum, or the lecture-room, or the drawing-school, but to the library, that we must go for the completion of our humanity. It is books that bear from age to age the intellectual wealth of the world.

PHILIP GILBERT HAMERTON, B. 1834.

So if you are reading a piece of thoroughly good literature, Baron Rothschild may possibly be as well occupied as you—he is certainly not better occupied. When I open a noble volume I say to myself, “now the only Cræsus that I envy is he who is reading a better book than this.”

FRANK CARR (LANCELOT CROSS), B. 1834.

The Library entered, the door closed, no sound to break the solemn hush which reigns around, one soon discerns how manifold are the ways in which the mind is tranquillized, deliciously solicited and sustained in its attention, by the sweet synod of Book-souls. Here it is good to be, in every mood; here, you can raise Pleasure to her height; you can, also, purge off the gloom which overcasts the mind in outer concerns, and heal the scar of the world's corrosive fires.

There is a pleasure in reading; a finer pleasure in reading and marking passages, which strike us with their power of thought or felicity of style; the finest pleasure consists in re-reading these marked passages. This process condenses an author into a few passages, it may be a few sentences.

The truest owner of a Library is he who has bought each book for the love he bears to it; who is happy and content to say,—“Here are my jewels; my choicest material possessions!”

WILLIAM FREELAND.

Give me a nook and a book,  
 And let the proud world spin round :  
 Let it scramble by hook or by crook  
 For wealth or a name with a sound.  
 You are welcome to amble your ways,  
 Aspirers to place or to glory ;  
 May big bells jangle your praise,  
 And golden pens blazon your story !  
 For me, let me dwell in my nook,  
 Here, by the curve of this brook,  
 That croons to the tune of my book,  
 Whose melody wafts me for ever  
 On the waves of an unseen river.

WILLIAM BLADES.

Even a millionaire will ease his toils, lengthen his life, and add a hundred per cent. to his daily pleasures if he becomes a bibliophile ; while to the man of business with a taste for books, who through the day has struggled in the battle of life with all its irritating rebuffs and anxieties, what a blessed season of pleasurable repose opens upon him as he enters his sanctum, where every article wafts to him a welcome, and every book is a personal friend.

WILLIAM E. A. AXON, B. 1844.

Every man should have a library. The works of the grandest masters of literature may now be procured at prices that place them within the reach almost of the very poorest, and we may all put Parnassian singing birds into our chambers to cheer us with the sweetness of their songs. And when we have got our little

library, we may look proudly at Shakespeare, and Bacon, and Bunyan, as they stand in our book-case in company with other noble spirits, and one or two of whom the world knows nothing, but whose worth we have often tested. These may cheer and enlighten us, may inspire us with higher aims and aspirations, may make us, if we use them rightly, wiser and better men.

ANDREW LANG, B. 1844.

In torrid heats of late July,  
 In March, beneath the bitter *bise*,  
 He book-hunts while the loungers fly,—  
 He book-hunts, though December freeze ;  
 In breeches baggy at the knees,  
 And heedless of the public jeers,  
 For these, for these, he hoards his fees,  
 Aldines, Bodonis, Elzevirs.

JAMES FREEMAN CLARKE (AMERICAN DIVINE).

Let us thank God for books. When I consider what some books have done for the world, and what they are doing, how they keep up our hope, awaken new courage and faith, soothe pain, give an ideal life to those whose homes are hard and cold, bind together distant ages and foreign lands, create new worlds of beauty, bring down truths from heaven—I give eternal blessings for this gift.

AUSTIN DOBSON.

But the row that I prize is yonder,  
 Away on the unglazed shelves,  
 The bulged and the bruised *octavos*,  
 The dear and the dumpy twelves,—



Montaigne with his sheepskin blistered,  
And Howell the worse for wear,  
And the worm-drilled Jesuit's Horace,  
And the little old cropped Molière,—  
And the Burton I bought for a florin,  
And the Rabelais foxed and flea'd,—  
For the others I never have opened,  
But those are the ones I read.

CHARLES F. RICHARDSON.

With young or old, there is no such helper towards the reading habit as the cultivation of this warm and undying feeling of the *friendliness* of books. If a parent, or a teacher, or a book, seems but a task-master ; if their rules are those of a statute-book and their society like that of an officer of the law, there is small hope that their help can be made either serviceable or profitable. But with the growth of the *friendly* feeling comes a state of mind which renders all things possible. When one book has become a friend and fellow, the world has grown that much broader and more beautiful.

The great secret of reading consists in this, that it does not matter so much what we read, or how we read it, as what we think and how we think it. Reading is only the fuel ; and, the mind once on fire, any and all material will feed the flame, provided only it have any combustible matter in it.

R. H. BAYNES.

If you love books immensely, and having little to spend, can but seldom afford the luxury of a new inmate of your shelves, what a treat it is to devote, with

clear conscience, some extra pound to the procuring a new delicious volume or two ! The consideration as to which, out of a long list of wants, shall pass over into the list of possessions ; the pleasure of the mere act of buying (the school-boy all over again) ; then the bringing the new treasures home ; the gratification of unwrapping them, and of showing them to your wife ; the calm enjoyment of cutting them open ; the excitement of the re-arrangement of the shelves ; the satisfied contemplation of these books when they are finally settled ; also on coming down the next morning ; the side glance of pleased remembrance of them for some days after !

JAMES MCCOSH.

The book to read is not the one that thinks for you, but the one that makes you think.

NOAH PORTER.

No man can read with profit that which he cannot learn to read with pleasure.

RICHARD DEBURY.

These are the masters who instruct us without rods, who cannot laugh at our ignorance.

THOMAS CARLYLE.

The true university of these days is a collection of books.

JOHN LOCKE.

Reading furnishes the mind only with material of knowledge ; it is thinking that makes what we read ours.

## FÉNELON.

The greatest defect in common education is that we are in the habit of putting pleasure all on one side, and weariness on the other,—all weariness in study, all pleasure in idleness.

MRS. R. C. WATERSTON (AN AMERICAN WRITER).

What is *unseen* forms the real value of a library. The type, the paper, the binding, the age, are all visible; but the soul that conceived it, the mind that arranged it, the hand that wrote it, the associations which cling to it, are the invisible links in a long chain of thought, effort, and history, which make the book what it is.

## ANONYMOUS AUTHORS.

Book-love is the good angel that keeps watch by the poor man's hearth, and hallows it; saving him from the temptations that lurk beyond its charmed circle; giving him new thoughts and noble aspirations, and lifting him, as it were, from the mere mechanical drudgery of his every-day occupation. The wife blesses it, as she sits smiling and sewing, alternately listening to her husband's voice, or hushing the child upon her knee. She blesses it for keeping him near her, and making him cheerful, and manly, and kind-hearted.

We have known Book-love to be independent of the author, and lurk in a few charmed words traced upon the title-page by a once familiar hand—words of affectionate remembrance, rendered, it may be, by change and bereavement, inexpressibly dear! Flowers in books are a sweet sign, and there is a moral in their very withering. Pencil-marks in books frequently re-

call scenes, and sentiments, and epochs in young lives that never come again. The faint line portrays passages that struck us years ago with their mournful beauty, and have since passed into a prophecy. Thoughts and dreams that seem like a mockery now are thus shadowed out.

There are some books which forcibly recall calm and tranquil scenes of by-gone happiness. We hear again the gentle tones of a once familiar voice long since hushed. We can remember the very passage where the reader paused a while to play the critic, or where that eloquent voice suddenly faltered, and we all laughed to find ourselves weeping, and were sorry when the tale or the poem came to an end. Books read for the first time at some particular place or period of our existence may thus become hallowed for evermore, or we love them because others loved them also in by-gone days.

A pretty allegory might be made showing how a certain Pygmalion collected together a divine library, so beautiful, so perfect, so harmonious in all its parts, that he who made it and gazed upon it was straightway smitten with a passion which made his heart to beat and his cheek to glow; and how presently the library became alive to him, a beneficent being, full of love and tender thought, as good as she was beautiful, a friend who never failed him; and how they were united in holy wedlock and lived together, and never tired of each other until he died, when the life went also out of the library, his wife, and she fell all to separate pieces, every piece a precious seedling of future life should it be planted in the right place. Is there not here the material for an allegory? A library, you will

perceive, is essentially feminine : it is receptive ; it is responsive ; it is productive. You may lavish upon it—say, upon her—as much love as you have in your nature, and she will reward you with fair offspring, sweet and tender babes—ideas, thoughts, memories, and hopes. Who would not love the mother of such children ? Who would not be their father ?

It is really an appalling thing to think of the people who have no books. Can we picture to ourselves a home without these gentle friends ? Can we imagine a life dead to all the gracious influences of sweet thoughts sweetly spoken, or tender suggestions tenderly whispered, of holy dreams, glowing play of fancy, unexpected reminding of subtle analogies and unsuspected harmonies, and those swift thoughts which pierce the heart like an arrow and fill us with a new sense of what we are and what we may be ? Yet there are thousands and tens of thousands of homes where these influences never reach, where the whole of the world is hard, cruel fact unredeemed by hope or illusion, with the beauty of the world shut out and the grace of life destroyed.

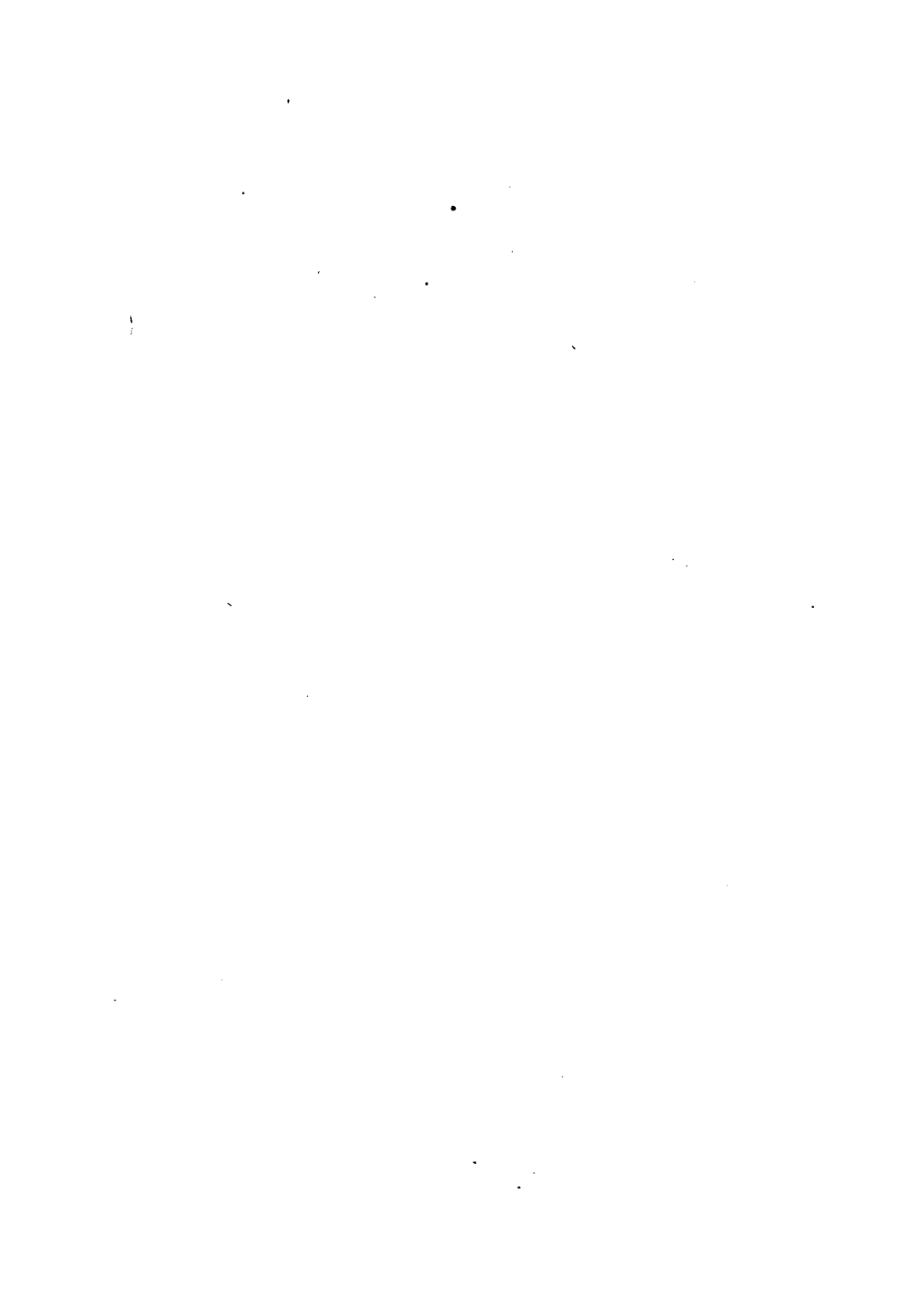
Overmuch reading and promiscuous reading are great hindrances to the formation of a critical habit. The critic does not gulp : he tastes ; he discriminates between Hamburg sherry and the true wine of Xeres by the aid of a wine-glass, not a tumbler. But the omnivorous reader is like unto one who takes his draught from a quart pot.

Books!—the chosen depositories of the thoughts,

the opinions and the aspirations of mighty intellects ; like wondrous mirrors that have caught and fixed bright images of souls that have passed away ; like magic lyres, whose masters have bequeathed them to the world, and which yet, of themselves, ring with un-forgotten music, while the hands that touched their chords have crumbled into dust.

**THE END.**

































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