

After alluding to the different literary and other institutions of the city, he suggested, as other modes of spending the evening, reading aloud, and reading with a purpose:—

"By reading with a purpose, I mean the exact opposite of reading to kill time. It is reading which may be made quite as interesting to many, as the other kind can be to one; it is not open to the reproach of selfishness, and its good fruits are manifold. It is especially applicable to books of history, travel, biography, and such historical novels as Sir Walter Scott's. I will illustrate what I mean, in this way: suppose a father or mother wishes to interest the Hugh Littlejohn of the household, and his brothers and sisters, in the story, say of King Robert Bruce. While the youthful reader is following his author, and all the audience are close up with their hero, what is easier than for *Pater* or *Mater Familias* to have a good map of Scotland on the table, exclaiming, from time to time: 'Here is Dumfries, where he slew Comyn!' 'here, near Perth, is where he narrowly escaped capture, in the woods of Methuen!' 'here is Rathlin, where he spent the winter of 1306, a fugitive, in exile!' 'here is Bannockburn, where, in 1314, Robert won his glorious victory!' This method of reading with a purpose would be a very valuable sort of fireside education, and might be applied as easily to Dr. Livingstone's travels in Africa, or to the historical books of the Bible, as to the 'Tales of a Grandfather.'

"As to reading aloud, I will only say this much for it, that to a young person having an ear for the music of our language, there can be no better or more natural teacher of elocution than the sound of his own or her own voice. It is as possible to make music from well cadenced English prose, as from the score of Verdi or Flotow; and it really is not creditable to the present state of taste amongst us, that we do not make a worthier use of that glorious instrument, of which we are all born performers—the language we speak and read, or, rather, which we too often murder and mutilate."

7. MY READING ROOMS, AND READING IN GENERAL.

Thomas Carlyle, in his incomparable essay on Voltaire, makes the following true statement, "Above all it is ever to be kept in mind, that not by material, but moral power, are men and their actions governed. How noiseless is thought! No rolling of drums, no tramp of squadrons, or immeasurable tumult of baggage-waggons attends its movements: in what obscure and sequestered places may the head be meditating, which is one day to be crowned with more than imperial authority, for kings and emperors will be among its ministering servants; it will rule not over, but *in* all heads, and with these, its solitary combinations of ideas, as with magic formulas, bend the world to its will! The time may come, when Napoleon himself will be better known for his laws than his battles; and when the victory of Waterloo will prove less momentous than the opening of the first Mechanics' Institute." Whatever tends to the expansion of the human intellect, the augmentation of mind power, and the refinement of thought and utterance, must be regarded evermore as a mighty moral and social force. We live in an intensely active and enquiring age, and the great cry of individuals as well as communities is, "give us mental aliment." This anxiety is both natural and relevant, and is perfectly in keeping with the original constitution of the human mind. It has also come to pass that no full, well-developed, or vigorous intellectual life can be lived now-a-days without great indebtedness to books. If a man be known as a thoughtful and appreciative lover of books, and as often asking their counsel, he will be held as a lover of wisdom; or, at least, his interest in books will be considered a pleasing sign of self-improving character. Full culture of the individual would seem impossible without the aid they alone can impart. A life of immense power of thought and action is ever associated with our highest literature. Books enlarge, enlighten, improve and empower us. The mind of the writer has laid its affluence of thought, recollection and hope at our feet. We are, by secret and silent contact, brought to sympathize with loftier minds; excitement, freedom, energy, are the result. Old mental limits are defined, old bondages crumble, and holding high the franchise of our individual liberty, we step to higher thought, deeper intuition; and, in laying aside an old self, assume a new and sprightlier manliness. Others, in offering to us *their* worth, have revealed to us our own. Plato is mightier than Cæsar, and the pen of the thinker than embattled battalions. Thrones and coronets, palaces and pyramids, rocks and mountains, are weaker than the world's best books. But reading is a work, a Herculean labour, and the reader must come to his book with a purpose, strong, determined and persevering, if he would read with the highest result. Reading, in the highest sense, is as necessarily a work of labour and solitude as is that of earnest thought. Deep mental life seeks seclusion—hides most purposely from vulgar gaze, that alone it may struggle for a body and a development. So it is with reading—read alone we must—with pains,

with patience, with oft-returning glance, for readings full effect upon our higher being. In reading a great and good book, we come in contact with a great and benevolent mind. The book itself was not a momentary growth—a mere efflorescence, but the result of close-bent, hard-strained, oft-foiled agony and effort. If, then, we would fully embrace thoughts, thus painful and agonistic in their birth, it is by no means a great thing that we should patiently, earnestly, anxiously seek their mastery and appropriation. Our thoughts will never be a reproduction of the author's we read, unless we are prepared to toil where they toiled, to groan where they groaned, and to writhe where they agonized. The merely desultory and miscellaneous reader seldom benefits either himself or others. By all he thus does he impairs his faculties, and teaches his memory to become treacherous. He reads much but knows little, his little "becomes beautifully less," until he becomes an absolute stranger to earnest and concentrated thought. His mind is always too much in haste to think, or reflect, or deliberate; he merely seeks to skim the surface, and hence he robs himself of the ability either to ratify or reverse the assumptions and conclusions of others. His memory becomes inert, his imagination folds its wing, his judgment droops and dies, he feels a momentary flash, and all is gone for ever.

Thus all the ends of reading are perverted; the price of knowledge, of wisdom, of endless delight, is in the hands of a fool, and the fool has nothing to show for his pains. It is an ominous augury when a man can sit down and devour a "New York Ledger," a sickly tale, or the last "novel," with the zest of a hungry hunter, and yet fight shy of a thoughtful and elevating book. Every determined self-improver has faculty enough to become a good reader. His object being power, stability, force of thought, "though baffled off," he wins the prize. Reading becomes a mighty instrument, by which he throws a new complexion over his moral history, and secures to himself an ever-increasing vigour of soul. Public, boundless, and unending sympathies attach to the wise and judicious reader. In no partial, circumscribed and partizan spirit can he, without self-reproach, permit himself to live.

Books are the highest representative value of the world; and a conscientious traffic therein enriches and elevates the soul. It is the prerogative of books, to originate, to gather, to offer and to disperse truth to the world. A book with truth pulsing through it like a heart, is mighty in catholicity, and exhales and transfuses an odor of far-darting vitality. It may be indigenous to the consecrated heights of intellectual writing; but, as the low-lying rain-clouds would not discharge their moisture but for their electrical connection with the light clouds immediately above them, so of books which elevate and transform us. But for the formations in the refined upper atmosphere of poetry and sentiment, the *practical* thoughts which rain such beneficent influences on the world, could never send forth their gifts, and their energy. There are some individuals who can only deal with the practical; and the higher and more spiritual crystallizations of thought and poetry are so many roamings and foamings that have no utility or worth. And yet there would soon be a painful dearth of all good action were it not for this apparently unpractical thought. There is an essential poetry in the stars that shine, in the winds that sigh, in the rains and the rivers, in the fruits and the flowers, yea, in everything above and around us; and we envy not the man who can only see a town's pump in the pierian spring of the poet.—*Norfolk Messenger*.

8. READING HABITS.

Good mental habits should be cultivated by a wise supervision of a child's reading when out of school. Most children will read of their own accord if they can get hold of attractive books, and will fly from the comparative drudgery of the school to the interesting volume of travels, tales, or adventures, which stimulates the imagination and requires no effort. This tendency must be turned to good account, and prevented from becoming a source of evil. Travels and adventures, if well selected and well read, are, of course, useful; and the same may be said of some tales. But never, perhaps, was care in the selection of books, especially of those comprised under the general term of "light literature," more necessary than in the present day. The flippant tone of some, the disgusting slang of others, the exaggerated colouring of another class, are, to the tender and impressible mind of the child, like attractive poison. The imagination, over-stimulated, becomes jaded, and demands more extravagant incidents, profounder mysteries, and darker horrors. And it is needless to say that where this is the case, the inclination, and often not only the inclination, but, for a time, the capacity, for sound, good reading, is lost. What is more sad than to find young people blind to the attraction of some of the best specimens of English literature—indeed, utterly ignorant of it—while reading with morbid avidity second and third-rate works of exciting fiction? This must be the parent's care. "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes," is a resolve which ought to apply especially