

There is a reading and writing room and an excellent library which, with its catalogue and contents, is an example of the infinite care and trouble taken by the Misses Skinner to render the holiday spent in this home a rest for mind as well as body.

None know better than they the effect upon girls of reading intelligently good, well selected books, and one is not surprised to find that great attention and intelligent, loving care have been bestowed on this department of the home.

There are now over a thousand volumes, and the catalogue in which they are arranged and registered is in itself unique and well worth a study. First the books are arranged in sections; for example, poetry, biography, novels, theology, essays, science, history, hygiene, domestic economy, French books and magazines.

Each section is prefaced by remarks for the benefit of the guests and to guide them as to what to read and how to make the most of what they read. These remarks are so good that I should like to give them all, but space will only allow me to give a very few of them.

#### POETRY.

Poetry is the most perfect expression of the highest thoughts of the greatest men.

Try to like the best poetry. Don't say, "I don't care for poetry" as if it were something to be proud of; try to cultivate a liking for it. Ruskin says, "I do not wonder at what men suffer but at what they lose."

Don't lose poetry out of your life; climb the Alps when the valleys suffocate you; get out of the dust into the fresh, pure air; out of the grey into the blue; you will do your work all the better for it. Read the best poetry. For better appreciation of the poets read *With the Poets*, Dean Farrar, and *Theology in the English Poets* by Amy Sharpe. Those who wish to understand Browning's poems should read Browning's *Message to the Times* by Dr. Bardeol. Read *Aurora Leigh* by Mrs. Barrett-Browning for a noble ideal of what women can be and do.

If you have but little time use that little for the very best. If you read the best you will like the best; as Tennyson says, "We needs must love the highest when we see it."

Spare half an hour a day to be a man or woman as well as a worker; your work will be the fresher for it. When the noise of the Strand or the whirr of the machines deafens you take ten minutes each day resolutely out of the dinner hour to go into green meadows with Matthew Arnold in the *Scholar Gipsy*. I do, and go back cooled and refreshed, as if I had rested under the shadow of a spreading tree on a sunny lawn.

The drama or plays come next in literature to poetry.

Read Shakespeare's plays, especially *Macbeth*, *Merchant of Venice*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and afterwards you will wish to read the historical plays. Read Donder's *Primer on Shakespeare* and the notes to the plays and you will not care for inferior ones.

#### BIOGRAPHY.

Lives of good or great men and women. Read them to stimulate and lift up your own life, to enable you to conquer difficulties and to be brave and strong as those men and women were to stand up and not lie down in life.

To see what men and women like ourselves have been and have done; how they have fought with life and gained the victory; how they have gained strength out of suffering and learnt sympathy from sorrow; how they have helped other people and done good to the world.

Read *Kingsley's Life*, *Dr. Arnold's Life*,

*Sister Dora's Life*, *Father Damien's Life*, *Mary Carpenter's Life*, and *Father Matthew's Life* to see what good work for the world they have done, and to stir us up to do our part in making God's world what He intended it to be.

Women are inclined to be narrow, to care only for what belongs to their own families. Lives such as these help to broaden them and make them feel that they are citizens of the world as well as members of a family; the world belongs to them because it belongs to God, and they must do their part in it as Lord Shaftesbury, Charles Kingsley, Dr. Arnold and Mary Carpenter did.

In ourselves we can only live one life. In biography we can enter into the lives of many. Our own life is often dull because we have to do the same thing over and over again. Get out of your own life by getting into the lives of others. Dulness is being shut in; get out. You are sitting in a dreary London room with no outlook but chimney pots. Look out with Charles Kingsley's eyes on to the Devonshire moors; with Tyndall on the Alps; with Ruskin up into the sky.

Look over the list of people's lives in the catalogue and see how many acquaintances you can make.

You would have liked to know Charles Dickens. Well, make his acquaintance in his life in the library.

Every one who enjoyed reading *Westward Ho! Hyppatia*, and *Two Years Ago*, would like to know the author, Charles Kingsley. Read his life; it is most interesting. You would have thought it an honour to have a letter from him, read his tender loving letters which might have been addressed to you or me and see with his eyes the beautiful scenery he describes.

Read Charlotte Brontë's life to learn what difficulties a woman can struggle with and overcome; how genius can be combined with a stern sense of duty, not as some foolishly think that genius is an excuse for neglect of duty.

The higher the mind the keener should be the sense of duty, for brains help us to discern it. Intellect is a help to goodness; goodness is strength. It is a poor thing to be overcome by the lowest part of you. Goodness is victory; wickedness is defeat. The lesson of biography is fight and conquer.

#### FICTION.

"Novels! When I read at all I read novels to amuse me."

Yes, only read the best novels—those that tell you about different kinds of life.

Novels are of real use in showing different kinds of life in different ranks; they also enlarge our sympathies by depicting various kinds of suffering which you have not experienced and this enables you to help other people better. Use novels that way, to help you to make other lives brighter. Novels are like society. Choose the best society, it is the most interesting. It is not a bit of good tacking a good moral on to the last page of a book if you have been wading in dirt for three volumes.

Never read a novel after which you have to wash your mind or which weakens you for the battle of life or which makes you discontented with ordinary healthy life.

Don't read any book which makes you feel as though you were in low society. Choose novels which depict different sides of life. Read historical novels, for they teach you of other times and of foreign countries, for example, *On the Edge of the Storm*, *Richelieu*, and others like them. Read, however, something beside novels. It is not good to live upon even wholesome sweets; always have another book going as well as a novel—meat and pudding I call it.

#### THEOLOGY.

"I do not wish so much for religious books as books written in a religious spirit."—Dr. Arnold.

All good books are religious, for it is God who helps the poet to see the beauty of life, the historian to see facts, the scientific man to search out the secrets of Nature and the novelist to put forth a high ideal.

Some books are specially about God and His action in the world. This is theology; and we have set apart a section of the library for theology.

Books which give us high and noble and generous ideas of the kind of life we ought to live, not poor, mean and grasping notions of what we can get for ourselves. Books which show that religion includes all good things, not only sacraments and prayers for the soul, but education for the body and training for the mind.

Read *Kingsley's Sermons*, and don't set yourselves against them because they are called sermons; read *The Good News of God*, *From Death to Life*, *A Little Pilgrim in the Unseen*, and *Religions of the World and Their Relation to Christianity*, not an easy book but deeply interesting to the thoughtful. For hymns choose strong vigorous ones that stir you up to action, not lull you into repose. Lift yourself up to your religion, don't lower your religion to yourself.

Your religion is your life, your life and nothing less.

#### SCIENCE AND NATURAL HISTORY.

"Science? Oh, it is so dull and one wants something amusing."

Dull, nothing of the kind! It's the most interesting thing in the world if you get into it; geology especially; it means understanding something of the world we live in. Doesn't it seem rather stupid to know nothing about the earth we are treading every day?

Science opens our eyes. God meant us not to be blind but to see. Science is one of God's teachers.

Science, even a little knowledge of it, removes many difficulties. Science teaches us that the world is governed by law; the laws of storms for instance. Captains of ships learn them and avoid certain currents, etc. It teaches also that pestilence follows dirt. Science is a true friend to religion. It has swept away many wicked superstitions. It is God and man working together. It is a great pity so many women do not care for science. A knowledge of science enlarges your minds, gives you another world, many other worlds to live in.

Don't sit down before the doors of science, enter in. The harder you work the more you need change of thought. Read Sir John Lubbock's *Beauties of Nature*, and *Phasures of Life*.

#### ASTRONOMY.

It is strange how little people know about the sky.

Ruskin says, "It is the part of creation in which Nature has done more for the sake of pleasing man and more for the sole purpose of talking to him than in any part of her works."

The sky is intended for our perpetual pleasure, therefore look at it. Study the sky and learn something of the countries in the firmament. Learn the difference between the stars which do not move and the planets or wanderers which appear from time to time.

#### BOTANY.

If you know nothing of botany the flowers are strangers to you. Even a little knowledge makes them into friends.

Botany is about the flowers you see in the lanes, the plants and ferns, mosses, and lichens. When you go into the lanes bring in all the flowers you can find and look them out