

to make me see that they were "doing nothing," I requested them to remain after school. When the other pupils had left the building, the younger boys were crying lastly; so after a few words of reproof I dismissed them. But the big boy yet remained, and what to do with him, or how to punish him, I really could not think, for he had been whipped and turned out of school for each successive winter for four or five years till now he ranked with almost the lowest classes. As for whipping him that was out of the question, for he was a small heavy-set boy of seventeen with that hard face, don't-care-look which is so often seen depicted on the countenances of men old in vice. He was watching me as I went about my work, covering the fire and sweeping, and almost hoping he would take "leg bail" as we often hear of prisoners doing, but this he showed no signs of doing and I did not know what I should say to him. After doing all the work I could find any pretence for, I looked out of the window, and to my relief saw the carriage coming for me, and I knew that my time was necessarily short, so walking

ravely up to him with my heart beating almost to suffocation, I calmly took a seat beside him. "Johnny," I began. "You can't think how sorry I am that this has happened. It has set such a bad example among the small scholars for them to see the largest boy in school indulging in such an odd habit as wearing his hat in the school-room, but," I continued as he did not reply, "it may be that your head was cold, if so I was wrong to speak to you about it, for I care more for the comfort and pleasure of my scholars than anything else, unless it is their advancement, for I do love to see my pupils go ahead and learn, and you seem to be doing very nicely in your lessons—but after this if your head is cold and you wish to wear your hat during school hours, I will make no further objections." I rose and went to get my hat and shawl. "But my head is not cold, and I do not want to wear my hat in school for them to laugh at." I turned and looked, and could it be? Yes, he really was crying. I could stand it no longer, my fear of him had fled; I flung down my hat and went up to him and laying my hand on his shoulder and said, "Johnny, let us be friends, you can help me so much if you only will, and I know I can be a great help to you, if you will only let me." "Yes by thunder we will," he almost shouted as he grasped both of my hands and shook them until I began to fear there would be nothing left. "I say you're the boss teacher and a regular brick, every other teacher has tried thrashing me and when they couldn't they just bawled and turned me out of school that's what I 'lowed you was goin' to do, guess I didn't know you." "No, Johnny, you did not if you thought that for I don't want to lose any of my scholars in that way. I hope we will become better acquainted in the future and always be good friends." "You'd better bet," was his hearty, though rough answer, as we both left the school room together. After that I had no further trouble with him, in fact his influence and example went a great way toward governing the other pupils, so that my petty perplexities were in a great measure remedied. —*Our Country and Village Schools.*

MR. LOWELL ON BOOKS.

At the opening of the new public library in Chelsea, Mass., James Russell Lowell delivered an address, in which he said:

Southey tells us that in his walk, one stormy day, he met an old woman, to whom, by way of greeting, he made the rather obvious remark that it was dreadful weather. She answered, philosophically, that, in her opinion, "any weather was better than none!" I should be half inclined to say that any reading was better than none, allaying the crudeness of the statement by the Yankee proverb which tells us that, though "all deacons are good, there's odds in deacons." Among books, certainly, there is much variety of

company. Ranging from the best to the worst, from Plato to Zola, and the first lesson in reading well is that which teaches us to distinguish between literature and merely printed matter. The choice lies wholly with ourselves. We have the key put into our hands; shall we unlock the pantry or the oratory? There is a Wallachian legend, which, like most of the figments of popular fancy, has a moral in it. One Balkala, a good-for-nothing kind of a fellow in his way, having had the luck to offer a sacrifice especially well pleasing to God, is taken up into heaven. He finds the Almighty sitting in something like the best room of a Wallachian peasant's cottage—there is something profoundly pathetic in the homeliness of the popular imagination, forced, like the princess in the fairy tale, to weave its semblance of gold tissue out of straw. On being asked what reward he desires for the good services he has done, Balkala, who had always passionately longed to be the owner of a bag-pipe, seeing a half-worn-out one lying among some rubbish in a corner of the room, begs eagerly that it may be bestowed on him. The Lord, with a smile of pity at the meanness of his choice, grants him his boon, and Balkala goes back to earth delighted with his prize. With an infinite possibility within his reach, with the choice of wisdom, of power, of beauty at his tongue's end, he asked according to his kind, and his sordid wish is answered with a gift as cordial.

Yes, there is a choice in books as in friends, and the mind sinks or rises to the level of its habitual society, is subdued, as Shakespeare says of the dyer's hand, to what it works in. Cato's advice, *cum bonis ambula, consort with the good*, is quite as good if we extend it to books, for they, too, insensibly give away their own nature to the mind that converses with them. They either beckon upwards or drag down. And it is certainly true that the material of thought reacts upon thought itself. Shakespeare himself would have been commonplace had he been padlocked in a thinly shaven vocabulary, and Phidias, had he worked in wax, only an inspired Mrs. Jarley. A man is known, says the proverb, by the company he keeps, and not only so, but made by it.

Milton makes his fallen angels grow small to enter the infernal council room, but the soul, which God meant to be the spacious chamber where high thoughts and generous aspirations might commune together, shrinks and narrows itself to the measure of the meaner company that is wont to gather there, hatching conspiracies against our better selves. We are apt to wonder at the scholarship of the men of three centuries ago and at a certain dignity of phrase that characterizes them. They were scholars because they did not read so many things as we. They had fewer books, but these were of the best. Their speech was noble, because they lunched with Plutarch and supped with Plato. We spend as much time over print as they did, but instead of communing with the choice thoughts of choice spirits, and unconsciously acquiring the grand manner of that supreme society, we diligently inform ourselves and cover the continent with a net-work of speaking wires to inform us of such inspiring facts as that a horse belonging to Mr. Smith ran away on Wednesday, seriously damaging a carryall; that a son of Mr. Brown swallowed a hickory nut on Thursday; and that a gravel bank caved in and buried Mr. Robinson alive on Friday. Alas, it is we ourselves that are getting buried alive under this avalanche of earthly impertinences! It is we who, while we might each in his humble way be helping our fellows into the right path, or adding one block to the climbing spire of a fine soul, are willing to become mere sponges saturated from the stagnant goosepond of village gossip.

One is sometimes asked by young people to recommend a course of reading. My advice would be that they should confine themselves to the supreme books in whatever literature, or still better to choose some one great author, and make themselves thoroughly