

very few—all golden, and by no means to be neglected. There is the "Manual of Epictetus," a wonderful little book; Bacon's "Advancement of Learning," a most precious composition, and his "Essays" containing some of the strongest and raciest writing in English literature. There are the "Thoughts" (*Pensées*) of Pascal, one of the most living and suggestive books in the world, which every one should read who can read at all; Coleridge's "Aids to Reflection," much studied by young men thirty or forty years ago; and there is Carlyle's "Past and Present," a book of extraordinary power, which I cannot imagine any one reading without receiving much healthy stimulus for thought and life and work.

I dare say I have omitted to mention a good many books almost as good as those I have named. But I must repeat a remark already made. When you have gone through the list which I have suggested, and several of these books will bear reading many times, you may be trusted to find your way for yourselves.

3. You will perceive that there is one important part of the subject upon which I have not touched, and upon which I have left myself no time to do more than touch—I mean the manner and spirit of reading. Briefly, let me say, there should be some kind of method in our reading, if that is possible to us. There should also be thoughtfulness in reading—not the mere voracious consumption of books, which will no more nourish the mind or heart than quantities of undigested food will nourish the body. Then there should be a certain ready sympathy with the authors whom we study, just as with the human beings whom we meet in the world and in society. I do not mean that our reading should be uncritically and carelessly and thoughtlessly acquiescent, any more than we should give our con-

fidence to every new-comer without having any means of forming a judgment of his character; but that our approaches to books, as to men, should be genial and friendly, that we should be ready to recognize the good in them, that we should expect to be taught by them, rather than put ourselves in an attitude of opposition and contradiction. How well has Bacon described to us the happy mean in this respect:

"Read not to contradict and confute, nor to believe and take for granted, nor to find talk and discourse, but to weigh and consider. Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested. That is, some books are to be read only in parts, others to be read, but not curiously; and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention. Some books also may be read by deputy, and extracts made of them by others; but that would be only in the less important arguments, and the meaner sort of books; else distilled books are, like common distilled waters, flashy things."

Different men have different powers and methods, and some men have a special gift of getting at the contents of a book by doing little more than skimming it. This was the case with Dr. Johnson. "Dr. Adam Smith," says Boswell, "than whom few were better judges on this subject, once observed to me that Johnson knew more books than any man alive. He had a peculiar faculty in seizing at once what was valuable in any book, without submitting to the labour of perusing it from beginning to end." But there are not many men who have this gift, and for most of us the habit or the effort to skim books, instead of reading, would be fraught with danger. It is better to read fewer books, selected with care, and to read them thoroughly. Many of us read too much.