

sure that you will get on capitally with her; she is so fond of books and so very well read."

Possibly our hostess gave our fair companion the cue, or was it out of deference to our grey hairs and general fogeyism that she forebore to discourse on balls, matinees, and other social subjects, and did not profess anxiety to know whether we danced, or hunted, or played golf, or were fond of music? No, our fair blue-stocking—for if she did not look the part she made a laudable attempt to play it—inaugurated a conversation by a reference to the literature of the day.

"You are very fond of reading, are you not?"

"I read a little sometimes."

"Well, I read a very great deal. I am devoted to books. I have just finished"—here she mentioned one of our three-volume enemies. "Is it not awfully clever?"

Fortunately we had dived into the book sufficiently to gather that it dealt of matters beyond our ken, and fortunately, too, our very superficial knowledge of the contents was good enough for the occasion. But we were not sorry when she showed an inclination to carry the war into our own territory.

"Now, do tell me what you have been reading lately."

"'Woodstock.'"

"'Woodstock' I never heard of it. What a pretty name. Who is it by? Do tell me all about it."

"Well, it was written by one Walter Scott."

"Oh, indeed! Is it one of those—what funny name did he call his books by?"

"The Waverley Novels. Have you never read any of them?"

"Well, yes, I think I have read some, or tried to read them. But I am afraid that I skipped rather. They were so dreadfully—what shall I call

it?—prosy, and so unlike anything one reads now."

So unlike, indeed!

And once again—we knew a boy in the flesh not so many years ago, one of the most industrious, honest, and healthy little fellows we ever met in a fairly wide experience of that ubiquitous article, the British schoolboy. At the age of thirteen he had many virtues, but at the same time a most profound antipathy for reading or any sedentary occupation whatever excepting that of biting his nails. Whether the antipathy to reading was innate or the result of deficient home-training—whether, in fact, he was the sinner or his parents—it would perhaps be impertinent to inquire. He was very conscientious, good-tempered, and obedient, and what we may call the mechanical side of the intellect was fully developed. But he was wholly devoid of any literary taste whatsoever. He would learn with ease and repeat accurately whole columns of irregular verbs or nouns, could rattle off the names and dates of kings and queens, of battles and treaties, and work through a page of examples in arithmetic without making a single mistake. But he never opened a book out of school-hours except under dire compulsion, and, save only the results of cricket-matches and the names—initials and all—of prominent cricketers, knew nothing of what went on in the world beyond what came in the ordinary course of school-teaching. He might also be said to have had the capacity of locking up the door of his intellect, and keeping it locked until the sense of duty required that it should be opened. It was probably a sense of duty also which induced him to adopt a hoarse whisper by way of a voice in school-hours, and to reserve his natural intonation, which the Boanerges might have envied, for the playground or conversation with his