

Prof. Goldwin Smith's Advice to Teachers.

I need not magnify the importance of your profession to the commonwealth. A monarchy may do without popular education. The shepherd is content if the sheep will go or his dog can drive them the way he wishes. To a democracy popular education is a vital necessity. Lowe said rather cynically, we must educate our masters. It is better to say we must educate our political partners. This reconciles me to the assumption by the state of a duty which nature seems to have assigned to the family. I have more confidence, I confess, in the family than I have in the state, as governments now are.

A public school may, by its order, its regularity, its discipline, even by its physical cleanliness and neatness, afford a certain moral training. But I am not surprised at what seems to be the growing predilection on moral grounds, for private schools. Rising in the world, which our system practically inculcates, is a good principle in its way, both for the pupil and the commonwealth, the progress of which will be forwarded by his activity. But we cannot all climb over each others heads.

While you are teaching others do not forget your own culture. After hot summer days in the school-room, you will be more inclined for fresh air than for books. But there are winter evenings and Sundays; there is the close of life. Besides the public or travelling libraries, have little libraries of your own, with your favorite authors, to be taken down when the fancy strikes you. Editions of the classics are now very cheap. It is far better to be familiar with one great writer, than to know a little of twenty less great.

For serious literature, in forming such a little library, there are Bacon's Essays, marvellous condensations of wisdom in language the most majestic. There are Lamb's Essays of Elia, ever charming. There are Macaulay's Essays, unrivalled for brilliancy of style, though a little too cock-sure. Melbourne said he wished he were as cock-sure of anything as Tom Macaulay was of everything.

In English history I cannot help calling attention to Knight's Popular History, though being in eight volumes with wood cuts it is rather an expensive book. It gives a fair and lively narrative of events, with a full account of the manners, literature, and general life of the people, all in a genial and liberal spirit without taint of party. In biography, Boswell's Johnson is supreme.

In poetry, Chaucer soars singing joyously as a skylark in the literary dawn; but perhaps from the archaism of his language he is to most people rather a subject of study than a source of pleasure pure and simple. Never be tired of reading Shakespeare. The more you read him the more you will find in him. The first six books of "Paradise Lost" are about the most sublime of human compositions. If you want perfect rest turn to Cowper's "Task." All Scotchmen worship Burns, and we will join them if they will let us take the poetry without the man. Then comes the stirring age of the Revolution, and with it a galaxy of poets of the deeper kind, Byron, Wordsworth, Shelley, Coleridge, Keats. At last we have Tennyson, supreme in art and the mirror of our own age, with its science, its speculations, and its doubts.

Of the recent works of fiction I do not know much nor care to know much more. For political and theological novels I have no taste; let us have our politics and theology straight.

Miss Austen, I fear, is out of date for you though not for me who can remember that state of society. It is a pity, for she is a little female Shakespeare with the very rare gift of endowing her characters with life. Nobody has ever written such tales as Scott, and in reading anything of his, you enjoy intercourse with a truly noble gentleman. Thackeray is not really cynical, while he teaches you deep lessons in human nature. He not only makes us laugh, but does us good. There can be no better religious exercise than reading his "Christmas Carol." George Eliot, of course, is admirable, though rather philosophic and austere.

But choose freely for yourselves. Make your little library of your own favorites; only make your own little library.

The other day a Londoner said to a countryman: "I bet you anything you like you cannot spell three simple words that I shall give you within forty seconds."

"I'll take that on. Now, then, what are they?" said the countryman.

"Well, here goes," said the Londoner, as he pulled out his watch: "London."

"L-o-n-d-o-n."

"Watching."

"W-a-t-c-h-i-n-g."

"Wrong," said the Londoner.

"What?" exclaimed the countryman in surprised tones; "I've spelled the words you gave me correctly. I'm certain I'm not—"

"Time's up," the Londoner said triumphantly. "Why didn't you spell the third word—w-r-o-n-g?"

—*London Spare Moments.*