

in Sarnia would be justified and more than justified if it spread in Sarnia a facility to converse truly.

It is not necessary that it develop in Sarnia many first-rate thinkers; how many such need it develop from this time forth for evermore? How many real philosophers? the city of old was saved for ten righteous men? Shall we be more exacting? Will not ten original thinkers—ten thinkers, like Coleridge, whom his friends described “as an archangel—slightly damaged”—be sufficient to save Sarnia in this respect from this time forth forever?

For other and ordinary persons a facility to converse will do; and your motto is sufficient; “lege ut vivas,” is your motto, I see. Reading and action; thought and life; high thinking and strenuous living; the native hue of resolution and the pale cast of thought on the same Sarnia faces; φιλοκαλία μετ' ευστελείας, φιλοσοφία ἄνευ μαλακίας. And beware of the many pitfalls in reading. I do not speak of those who reverse your motto: qui vivunt ut legant: who live to read; of the ten Coleridges in prospect: they have their reward and their justification. I speak rather in the first place of those “qui ita legunt ut non vivant,” who miss life in thought and yet accomplish little in thought; who only bewilder themselves by their thought and reading, and when it is too late find they have missed their role in life and were never meant to be Coleridges. A very common fate in this day, when education often outruns the mental capacity of those who receive it and hanker after its treasures, but who have no root of brain power within themselves and become only ineffectual echoes of each passing book; the “Tomlinsons” of society in Mr. Kipling's brilliant versc. I speak in the second place of men a degree worse: “qui legant ne vivant;” of those who read to escape the practical duties of life; who excuse themselves for neglect of home duties and domestic charities by the plea of reading; of those men and women who avoid duller duties for novel reading. Reading, says a great Frenchman, is the dram drinking of the intellectual, their anodyne, and opium, and wine. It is their golf; it is their method of escaping care and worry and recollection; their device to secure oblivion; of such reading it is that the wise man said no time was more lost than the time spent in reading; such reading is only an hypocrisy, half-conscious of itself, for evading action. I may be permitted to doubt in this connection, especially as being one of the culprits, whether it is good for us to look forward very eagerly each month to the resuscitated Sherlock Holmes. Yet Sherlock tends to edification compared with many other modern heroes of romance.

I speak in the third place of men “qui legunt quod non vivunt,” of men who are too dead to life to see what goes on around them; too cold-blooded to realize the tragedy of every home in Sarnia; men without natural affection, but with an active mind which enables them, in default of eyes and ears and sympathy, to lose themselves in books. Our examination system is well calculated to bring such one-sided people to the front; the strong natures which cannot forget life in literature, and the real and present in the unreal and imaginary, do not shine as well upon paper in the examination hall; but such narrow, one-sidedness of interest and indifference to the actual is a misfortune to the community, and though he does not know it, to the individual himself also, unless, indeed, he be one of the ten Coleridges; one of the ten who think and dream to great purposes

and great results. As I look back from this distance upon Oxford and her schools, I remember men with equal or greater ability and application who were handicapped by the fuller life they felt, the deeper interest they took in the questions of the hour, and by their consequent inability to lose themselves in the philosophy or history of Greece and Rome.

Books, says Macaulay, never fail one, never perish, never are out of temper, never are taken away; but whether there be sweethearts, I suppose he means, they shall fail, whether there be friends they shall cease, whether there be wife and child they shall vanish away; and so it is. Yet it is bad thing for a man and his friends—always assuming he is not of the ten righteous—that books should take the place of living men and women. We want this library, and you who read in it, to give the outsiders more of the books; not to leave them for the books; you are not to be taken from the world to books, but to take books to the world; take the inspiration of the books here home to the men who can not find time to come, and above all to the women hard pressed with domestic trifles, intellectually starved by the dull, unvarying round of domestic cares to the women for whom the Greek Euripedes used to plead, that no one needed more the larger air of the outside world and the reviving breath of new interests.

Remember the parable of Martha and Mary does not admit of application in this age and country, where it is the Maries who have chosen the better part, who have listened to the voice of love, that are afterwards cumbered with much service; your mission, you readers here, is to take the inspiration of this library to them.

This, then, is your motto, “lege ut vivas,” and no age needed it more. In all the old problems of democracy in the past, in questions of slavery, questions of popular education, questions of class government, questions of a united country, popular instinct unenlightened by reading was a fair guide in the solution of difficulties; a better guide at any rate than sophisticated self-interest and enlightened selfishness; but here is a question before us, the question of Free Trade and Protection, flung upon us suddenly, which is no question of instinct, which needs reading and thought, even statistics and experts, as no popular question needed them before. Think for a moment of what priceless service this library would be if it could only equip a few men here to really understand and be able to explain to others the new and pressing yet all-important question of the day; this question in which sentiment, commerce and the philosophy of human nature are all involved and all to their highest powers; this question which is above all questions, for philosophers; and which yet, ironically and tragically, seems likely to be made the football of party politics and of the clap-trap of mass meetings.

If your library could help you there, you would feel at once the profound truth that books outweigh the greatest public works, the greatest of railways and manufacturing; that books are bridges, and the most lasting of bridges; bridges over the gulfs of ignorance and prejudice; over the marshes of ennui and indifference, over the pitfalls of temptation and evil, and one book in particular—“with it began with it must end my speech:” ἐν σοὶ μὲν λήξω σοὶ δ' ἀρξομαι—one book has been and is and well be a bridge over the river of death.

MAURICE HUTTON.