

HOME LIBRARY A NECESSITY;  
WHAT IT SHOULD CONTAIN.

(By Margaret E. Sangster.)

A home without books is like a rose without perfume. No house is completely furnished that has no library. There are, to be sure, homes without number in which there are chairs and tables, china and glass, rugs and draperies, soft couches, curios and bric-a-brac, pictures and vases, but never a book. If you happen to call in such a house, and the mistress keeps you waiting while she changes her toilet, you look in vain for a book to pass away the moments of inaction. If you are staying in such a house and have not brought with you something to read, you look in vain for an entertaining volume or an attractive magazine.

People who do not spend money for books are apt to be parsimonious in subscribing for magazines. A taste for literature demands gratification. Where the taste does not exist people are satisfied, strange as it may seem, to endure a state of absolute pauperism in the matter of reading.

We all know houses where there are books enough to form the simulacrum of a library, but when they are examined they are discovered to be a fearful and wonderful collection of misfits, old school books, books that have been received by the children as prizes, books that have been picked up by the traveler to cheer the tedium of a railway journey, books that have been sent into the house as holiday presents, and books that have been borrowed and never returned. Odd volumes of this and the other author of repute appear in these weird and queerly-assorted conglomeration. But of complete sets and of books that instruct, amuse and satisfy, there are few to be seen. Hundreds of such miscellany libraries are only fit to be used as kindling and would find their best end in a rubbish heap or a bonfire. The second-hand shops would have none of them. Even where people intelligently collect books, there is occasion from time to time for judicious weeding and for letting go that which is ephemeral, and, for all practical purposes, worthless.

Although public libraries are multiplied, every home should have its own library, just as it has its own beds and tables. It is not necessary to appropriate a room and use it solely for books. Very few of us have space to spare for this luxurious accommodation of our literary treasures.

The living room is the proper place for the home library: the shelves to hold the books, may be of home manufacture, put together by anybody who can manage a plane and a hammer, and they may be stained in harmony with the color scheme of the room.

What to choose for the library is the first consideration. A library that grows as a garden grows or an orchard, little by little, is in the end the library that one loves best. I would suggest that the initial purchase should be a set of Shakespeares in good type, with fine illustrations, each volume small enough to be held in the hand without weariness.

Although Sir Walter is out of fashion, it is possible to cultivate his acquaintance if one has a set of the Avenley novels in one's possession. Sir Walter Scott is a little leisurely in his movement, so far as the beginnings of his romances are concerned, but once you are fairly embarked in his company the pace is swift enough for the interest of most readers.

A full set of Dickens and of Thackeray, a set of Balzac and of Robert Louis Stevenson should be added to the library which is to be an integral part of the household life. If one cannot purchase a set all at once, buy a single book at a time, setting aside a part of the weekly or monthly income for the purpose.

"Boswell's Life of Johnson" is a never failing source of pleasure to the reader who enjoys biography at its best. A shelf should be set aside for the lives and let-

ters of men and women who have done good service to their periods. Here we would find, were we setting out to form a library, wide room for wise selection. As a rule, choose the lives of those who have done something for their time, and around whom great movements have focused.

A home library will be incomplete without poetry. Do not consider poetry as merely decorative; it is the fit food for the culture; mind. If one does not care for it, he is to be pitied.

Every home library should be furnished with some sacred literature. An alarming ignorance of the Bible is a characteristic of our day. To this cause, more than to any other, may be attributed the prevalence of graft, the increase of corruption in politics and the general lowering of old-fashioned ideas of honor. We shall never be independent of the Ten Commandments.

## THE SECRET OF PEACE.

Thirty centuries ago there lived in Palestine a king, who in his boyhood had been a shepherd lad. And in his old age, when he had seen life with its sorrows and its joys, this king, David, sang a song, which it takes less than two minutes deliberately to repeat.

Three thousand years have gone since then; and today everything he owned has turned to dust, except his songs. The throne on which he sat—dust; the palace where he dwelt—dust; the harp which his fingers were accustomed to sweep, the banner with which he led the hosts of Israel, his chariots, and his charioteers—all dust; but today that song goes singing its way to the universal heart, in the cottage of the poor and the mansion of the rich, in the home of the learned and of the unlearned, because it sings of what all the world is hungering for—peace.

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." What? Rest. "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." But the green pastures have to come first. There is the contemplative life, and the active life. And my brethren, we need the first; that is the meaning of these services; that is the meaning of Sunday; that is the meaning of Lent. It is a mistake for us to suppose that we can get on in the right life without these green pastures experiences. Somebody says, "I judge of a man by what he does." Yes; but what a man does grows out of what that man is. And here in these contemplative hours we find Christian manhood and womanhood in the making.

And then, there is the leadership; "I shall not want"—guidance; "He leadeth me." That is the other side of the Christian experience; the active side. The purpose of these green pastures is to send us forth to use the strength which here we get.

And in this leadership of His there are two facts which I would have you remember. He goes before us: "He leadeth." He will select no path which His sheep cannot travel. But remember also that the sheep must follow after; we must select no path which He cannot travel.

"He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness," not always by the side of still waters, not always in green pastures—sometimes the sheep track may be across the wilderness; but if we are following Him we may know that they are always "paths of righteousness"—right paths, and that they lead toward home.

And finally, "I shall not want" companionship. "Yet, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me." He who is following the Master shall find death itself only a shadow; and who shall be afraid of a shadow? And though the valley may be there and the darkness, He shall lead us out, as He leads us in. Death is not a blind pocket; it is not a place of tarrying, only of transition. I shall walk "through the valley of the shadow of death."

And now, having appropriated this psalm, having sought to appreciate it, let

us try to supply it. I mean to-day, here and now, and tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow, every day. For you observe that until we reach the very last verse it is all in the present tense. He is not speaking of any distant elysium, far away in the future. "The Lord is my shepherd; he maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters." All the blessings which I have described may be yours now. Will you take them for yours, and apply them to the problems of your life today? Oh, learn to practice the presence of God. Try to think of Him as really at your side. Speak to Him when you are in trouble or perplexity. Suppose you make a test of this Shepherd psalm only for to-day. Suppose you say, "from now until the hour when I fall asleep at night, I will seek to live with this thought supreme, that God is mine, and that He loves me, and is leading me." See what it will mean to you in peace and comfort and joy. And then realize that if you can do it for one day, you can do it for every day, and the problem of your life's meaning is solved. And when the last valley shall have been passed, and passed through, and you are drawing near to that fold, which James Lane Allen describes as "the final land where the mystery, the pain and the yearning of his life will either be infinitely satisfied or infinitely quieted," though you shall have changed your place, you will not change your company; He who was with you here will be with you there, and thus shall still go singing its way on and up into the eternal light: "Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."—Geo. T. Dowling, D.D.

## HAPPY LIVING.

Cultivate faith, obedience, service. The secret of holy and happy living is gathered up in these three words. There are a great many things we cannot understand, but these lie within our reach, and if we hold to them they will bring us through the darkest night beneath which the soul of man ever wrestled into the perfect day.

1.—Faith. If you cannot see God clearly, look toward the spot from whence His voice comes, as a child instinctively turns in the dark towards the place from which its mother's voice issues; and remember that the mountains which soar the highest in the dark will be the first to catch the glint of the morning beam at dawn. Follow on to know the Lord. Faith is the motion of the soul Godward.

2.—Obedience. Every time you obey you pull up the blind and let in more light. Every time you obey you break down the restraining reef and let more of the sea into the bay of your life. Obey the voice of God in the Book, the voice of God in your heart, the voice of God as He speaks through circumstances and His servants—obey.

3.—Service. Never let a day go by without making the world a brighter, happier place for others and, as you do so, the life abundant will gush out. A friend once told me that while he stood in the old Forum at Rome, watching the workmen using the pickaxe, one of them happened to strike away some rubbish and debris which had lain for centuries and, as he did so, a fountain of water, well known in classic times as the Virgin's Fountain, but which had been imprisoned for centuries, found glad utterance again; the imprisonment was over, the stone was taken away from the sepulcher, and the beautiful fountain gushed into the Italian sunshine.

It may be that today such an experience is to be yours and that some debris which has accumulated upon your heart, choking your life, by the grace of God and by the act of your own choice shall be put away, so that the life which has been checked and restrained may become abundant and you may know the fulfillment of our Lord's words: "It shall become in them a well of water, springing up into eternal life."