

the choice and master spirits of all ages. Here is a society ever open to us, the best and most desirable we can conceive,—the truest aristocracy of the human race in their happiest mood, with their wisest and deepest thoughts on their lips. It is in no figurative sense, but in sober truth, that I call this "society." From what has been said of style, it is manifest that the influence of a great work on a competent literary capacity does not differ in kind from the influence of personal contact. If somewhat is lost in vividness, many of the limitations of personal converse are absent. But if in the best literature we find, in no merely hyperbolical sense, society, it is, like all good society, difficult of access. Not much of worth in this world but is the prize of merit, of toil, of patience. The gardens of the Hesperides stood ever open, but to fetch the golden apples was the labour of a Hercules. The books are waiting on the shelves, but he is far astray indeed who thinks to win the secret of Goethe, of Shakespeare, of him

"Who saw life steadily and saw it whole,  
The mellow glory of the Attic stage."

in the same easy fashion in which he skims through the last popular novel, or an ephemeral essay of the periodical press. To experience the power of literature, to appreciate style in its fulness, to feel not merely the main emotion, but the whole complex of emotions with which a writer regards his subject, is the outcome only of constant and careful study, combined with a large innate susceptibility to literary art. Though the capacity for the highest literary appreciation is not common, in most men a measure of innate