

Dr. Currie tells us that the books of the poet were numerous and well selected, and an Edinburgh bookseller valued them at £90,—a large sum for a miscellaneous collection of volumes brought at once to peremptory sale.

Amongst those enumerated we find :—

Dugald Stewart's *Philosophy*.

Burke on the Sublime and Beautiful.

Boileau's Works.

Melworth's Cicero.

Dr. Johnson, Goldsmith, Swift, Sterne.

The Essayists as the Spectator, Rambler, Tatler, etc.

2 Editions of Shakespeare, Molière's Plays.

Encyclopædia Britannica, in 3 vols.

Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*.

Josephus.

Hume & Smollett, *History of England*.

Robertson's *History of Scotland*.

Hume and Montaigne's *Essays*.

Various Books of *Travels*.

And for Poetry :

Homer, Virgil, Tasso, Chaucer, Milton, and a host of others; and above all :

Blair Tillotson and Sherlock's *Sermons*.

Works of John Knox.

Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted*.

Baxter's *Saint's Rest*, etc., etc.

This is the sort of literary food upon which the Ayrshire Ploughman fed; who shall say how much this may have had to do with the production of that noble poem: "The Cotter's Saturday Night"?

The same remark may be made of some other self-made men: Thomas Cooper and Ebenezer Elliott are especial instances. Elliott tells us :—

"I never could read a feeble book through, and it follows that I read master-pieces only."

"The best thoughts of the highest minds: after Milton, Shakespeare: then Assian, then Junius, Swift's Tale of a Tub, Joan of Arc, Schiller's Robbers, Burgess' Leonora, Gibbon's Decline and Fall, and long afterwards Tasso, Dante, DeStael, Schlegel, Hazlitt and the Westminster Review."

A strange medley, truly, but valuable as revealing something of the sources of the author's peculiarities of writing and thinking.

Cooper gives us a most interesting record of his early reading, and furnishes a "plain, unvarnished tale" of how he educated himself through his books.

Fancy a shoemaker working at his trade, committing to memory the major part of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and seven of the plays of Shakespeare,—learning Hebrew and Greek, that he might read the Bible in the original, and giving up the study of the French language because it was so easy.

I am afraid that we do not read now-a-days as good books as our fathers read. I would recommend such reading as Plutarch and Josephus; and if we desire to read modern History, have we not Macaulay, Green, Froude, Prescott, Bancroft, Motley, Parkman and others?

Books of *Travels* such as Kinglake's *Eothen*, Warburton's *Crescent and the Cross*, and Livingstone's *Ex-*

*plorations in Africa* cannot fail to be interesting. Other African travellers might also be read, as Bruce, Clapperton, Belzoni, Lauder and McGregor Laird, and Voyages to the Arctic Regions, too.

British North America and the Dominion of Canada suggest a whole life-time of reading; and to prove that it need not necessarily be dry or dull, try Major Warburton's *Conquest of Canada* and Francis Parkman's charming *Histories*.

Biographies of eminent men are a most inviting and profitable class of reading—take a few names as examples:—Martin Luther; and of modern worthies—Nelson, Wellington, Watt, Stephenson, Wilberforce, Havlock, Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and many others.

And to "point a moral and adorn a tale," the lives of Napoleon the Great and Napoleon the Little should not be omitted.

If you would read French authors, you are not compelled to take Alexandre Dumas and Eugène Sue—fascinating though they are. Why select such authors in preference to Racine, Molière, or Corneille, to Lamartine, Arago, Thiers, Guizot, Louis Blanc, Beranger, or Victor Hugo?

If your tastes be politically inclined, the Lives and Speeches of Chatham, Fox, Canning, Peel, Erskine, Lyndhurst and Brougham will remain when the effusions defending "National Policies" shall have passed away and be forgotten.

"The earth has bubbles as the water hath; and these are of them."

If poetry be your taste, in addition to the universally acknowledged superiority of Shakespeare and Milton, I believe that no language can show such an inexhaustible mine of wealth as may be found in the writings of the minor poets of Great Britain and America: Dryden, Pope, Gray, Cowper, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Southey, Campbell, Keats, Leigh Hunt, Chas. Mackay, Browning, Tennyson, Longfellow, Bryant and Whittier. It would be unfair to pass unnoticed the writings of the poetesses. Mrs. Hemans, Mrs. Norton, Joanna Baillie, Mrs. Sigourney and Eliza Cook.

"Blessings be with them, and eternal praise.

The poets! who have made us heirs on earth  
Of peace and pure delight, through heavenly lays."

A faithful reading of such authors as I have named will lead to a just appreciation of other books (*unwritten books*), that we may study to a profit.

I remember that Eliza Cook wrote verses at 9 years of age, and her father threatened her that if she did not leave off scribbling, he would burn her books. Whereupon the youthful poetess replied :

"Burn, burn them all, it matters not,

There's earth and sky and sea,

And those three volumes—Nature's works—

Are quite enough for me."

For myself I would say that reading poetry has been to me "an exceedingly great reward."

In my denunciation of fiction (*or novels*) I would not wholly exclude them from my reading, for in so doing I should shut out some of my pleasures, in such writings as those of dear Oliver Goldsmith, Sir Walter Scott and Washington Irving, the best of Bulwer's, Miss