

BENEFITS OF RIGHT READING.

(By Charles Loyd.)

Do we in these days give sufficient thought to our reading or do we often forget the remarkable effect reading has upon life and character, thus failing to enrich our minds as we might and indeed often by our reading actually impoverishing the deeper parts of our mental make-up?

In John Ruskin's peerless brochure "Sesame and Lilies" we catch a glimpse of how ordinary men and women may move in select society, a society of the greatest men and women whose choicest thoughts may be sought without any strain or stress. Indeed who are quietly waiting for us to go in and meet them. It is a law of life that as a man thinketh in his heart so is he. Action good or otherwise is born of some seed thought in the first place and it is to a large extent true that reading has a good deal to do with thinking. Our minds are like a sensitive film that receives an impression easily, which impression may, unknown to us perhaps, be the means at some future time of shaping our conduct. If it be conceded then that reading bears no small part in the formation of our thinking, is it not a subject worthy of the most careful attention?

As to what to read. There is no question that wholesome stories should form a part of the reading of all. For the young nothing can be better in the story line than fiction in an historical setting. The demand, however, for fiction today has become so appalling that many authors, instead of remaining artists in their line, have prostituted their powers to produce as many stories as possible for the sake of gain. Thus we get the sad picture of genius, instead of staying with its ideal, declining to mediocrity. Inquiry at any public library will reveal the fact that the average person reads nothing but stories. What kind of physical health would be produced by a constant diet of salad? And what kind of mental health will be engendered by a constant diet of novels?

The appetite is whetted by that upon which it feeds, and we create in ourselves a base appetite if we allow light reading and it alone to rule our taste. The story has its rightful place, but we shall lose greatly if we do not study weightier books which deal with questions of social interest or biographies of worthy men or women or books of travel or those containing the thoughts of some mature thinker—any book indeed that will cost us an effort to read and that will broaden the muscles of our minds for the task. Thus by giving exercise to our own thinking faculties we become mentally vigorous and the character and tone of our lives receive an uplift.

It is well to read some novels, but care should be exercised in their choice. Present day novels are not entirely to blame for the quality of their productions because the demand is forcing the supply and thus we get reams of reading matter which tends almost entirely to the sentimental and excites but seldom elevates. If each individual cultivated a taste for the best it would not be long before the public demand would create a more wholesome supply.

The calibre of such writers of fiction as Charles Dickens, Sir Walter Scott, Charles Reade, George MacDonald, Charles Kingsley and others like them is recognized by all discriminating readers and the perusal of their works affords real refreshment and there are authors today whose ideal is also high and for such we should be grateful.

It is open to some question whether as a general rule we give sufficient thought as to how to read. Reading is a pastime in which we are apt to fall into slack and slipshod habits. Picking up a book we often devour it hurriedly, as though we longed to get on to the next. Seizing upon the superficial characteristics of the story we lose the more lasting and valuable parts, thus missing many nuggets of true and bright thought. It is better to read fewer books and read them well than to read many without getting real benefit from any of them.

Good reading will inevitably enrich the vocabulary and aid us to express our own ideas in fitting language and it will also stimulate us to search for the meaning of unfamiliar words.

We live in a day of tremendous bustle and activity which seem to have permeated even our quiet recreations. We shall gain vastly if we eliminate the spirit of unrest from our reading, take our way out of the whirl of business and pleasure and determine to devote a portion of our time to undisturbed and real reading.

OUR DUTY TO KNOW OTHERS.

Only those who know us best help us most. When we are in greatest need, we seek out some friend who will not misunderstand, who knows us through and through, and who because of that intimate knowledge can sympathize and counsel and encourage as no stranger or mere acquaintance ever could. So it is that if we would really help others we must know them well. We can do little for the helpings of a surface acquaintance. The Sunday school teacher who sees his class only on Sundays cannot help them much. He may tell them interesting things, and hold their attention on Sundays; but he never binds permanently into their lives with hopeful uplift until he has come to know them through and through, as individuals, in all departments of their life. Christ helped men not merely because of the truth that He himself knew and lived, but because He knew men. "He needed not that any one should bear witness concerning men; for He himself knew what was in man." "Only as we know man can we serve him," says Campbell Morgan. It costs effort, and study, and patience, and love, to know any one. But such knowledge is one of the first costs of our Christian service.—Sunday School Times.

PRAYER.

Help us, O Lord, we beseech Thee, truly to lift up our thoughts and desires to Thyself. We bless Thee that we may speak all our hearts to Thee. We pray Thee that Thou wouldst help us to cast out of our minds any thoughts, and out of our lives any purposes and aims, of which we dare not speak to Thee. And do Thou come near to us now, that all which is within us may feel Thy touch, and be kindled to praise and magnify Thy great name. Surely Thou wilt enter even into the narrow rooms of our hearts if we open our desires to Thee, and Thou wilt come as the King of Glory, and fill the place with light and peace and power. Amen.

SUGGESTIVE.

We want and must have the heart of things in religion, but we cannot have them unless we "observe all things whatsoever" Christ has commanded. One must not be afraid of going through all needed motions. Think not that prayer will do as well if you sit still and take the floor for granted, instead of troubling yourself to kneel down. A lazy body and soul ill befit fervent prayer. Closed eyes, inert minds, quietness of spirit are means to be reckoned with. Who knows any one having the heart of religion, who absents himself from church, neglects his Bible, keeps no prayer tryst, gives no money to the Master's cause, makes Christ no promises, and shuns the communion table? Grace is the heart of things for us Christians, and no life of words is more to Christendom than this: Means of Grace.—Rev. T. C. Potter, D.D.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.

Mon.—The way downward (Prov. 1:20-33).
Tues.—Exceeding bitterness (Jer. 2: 9-19).
Wed.—Prodigals in the slum (Luke 15: 11-32).
Thurs.—The Saviour in the slum (Luke 5:29-32).
Fri.—The slum worth saving (Luke 7: 36-50).
Sat.—Tears for the city (Luke 19:41-46).

THE BATTLE OF THE SLUMS.

By Robert J. Speer.

The Young People's Society cannot do better than give an evening, or better still through the formation of a Mission Study Class, several evenings, to Dr. Josiah Strong's "The Challenge of the City," one of the Mission Study text-books of the Young People's Missionary Movement. Some quotations from Dr. Strong's book from the section on the slum will show its treatment of this great missionary problem of the city.

A special investigation of the slums of four great cities, made by the government in 1894, established the fact that the overcrowding, the illiteracy, the number of foreigners, the number of saloons, the amount of vice and crime were proportionately much greater in the slum than in the whole city, showing that the more degraded character of the people corresponded to the more degrading character of the environment.

"A recent writer says concerning the slums of Chicago: 'In one of these there are 35,000 people; in the other, 30,000. It is a region of adults. . . . The inhabitants neither labor regularly nor marry. Half of the men are beggars, criminals, or floating laborers; a quarter are engaged in the sale of dissipation; and a third of the women are prostitutes. . . . Society here has lapsed back into a condition more primitive than the jungle.'"

Of an East End Parish in London Professor Huxley wrote, speaking of conditions which he knew by personal contact and describing unconsciously our own slums as well: "Over that parish Dante's inscription, 'Leave hope behind, all those who enter here,' might have been written. . . . There was nothing to remind the people of anything in the whole universe, beyond their miserable toil rewarded by slow starvation. In my experience of all kinds of savagery all over the world, I found nothing worse, nothing more degraded, nothing more helpless, nothing so intolerably dull and miserable, as the life I had left behind me in the East End of London. Nothing would please me more than to contribute to the bettering of that state of things, which, unless wise and benevolent men take it in hand, will tend to become worse and worse, and to create something worse than savagery—a great Serbonian bog, which in the long run will swallow up the surface-crust of civilization."

The following table shows how much greater is the proportion of Italian and Slavic people in the slums than in the general population of our cities. The first column gives the total percent of population; the second, the percent of slum population:

Baltimore	1.97	12.72
Chicago	6.41	44.44
New York	9.45	51.11
Philadelphia	1.95	50.28

Contrast with this the facts as to the races from Northern Europe, the English, French, German and Scandinavian.

Baltimore	13.52	27.29
Chicago	30.79	19.64
New York	30.73	8.64
Philadelphia	22.95	8.44

The illiteracy of Italians and Slavs in the slums of these cities averaged 54.5 per cent., of Northern Europeans, 25.5, of native Americans, 7.4 per cent.

No sin or uncleanness is too great for Christ to purify, but he can go into the slums only in the persons of his disciples. Are there as they ought to be there?

Tell of Old Testament judgment that fell on evil cities.

What is being done for the slums? Have I any idea of how slum-dwellers live?

*Y.P. Topic, Nov. 28—Home Missions (Luke 14:15-23).