

prevail over the observation and the ideal is obscured. Not that we mould our lives to any individual character of any one book. Our ideal is rather a kind of composite photographic image on the sensitive plate of our minds of the characteristic moral features of all the people we admire in literature and in life. We are affected of course, by abstract moral reasonings in books, but these are most powerful when conveyed in concrete illustrations. The thoughtless cruelty of many a boy has been cured by that little fable of the old school readers where the old frog rebukes the boys who have been pelting him with stones. Much incipient snobbery has also been checked by such eulogies of the worthy poor as the *Deserted Village*, *Gray's Elegy*, *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, and the *Village Blacksmith*. And surely nothing outside of the teaching of the Master himself has done so much to develop the spirit of Christian charity in readers of English literature as Hood's *Bridge of Sighs* and *The Song of the Shirt!* Examples of this nature are infinite in number: it is enough to have recalled these.

As to the cultivation of the aesthetic nature, it is evident that the mind craves the perception and enjoyment of the beautiful as much as the body craves food. For we do not live by bread alone in this respect also. The young child and the most untutored savage even are pleased with concords of sweet sounds and colors. Literature ministers to this sense, developing and refining it, and tends to prevent that hardness and coarseness of heart which come with worldly aims and struggles, too long followed and too eagerly carried on. In poetry, especially, the perpetual music of the rhythm and rhyme brings a delight directly to the ear, while the images which the writer employs to develop his thought, fill the mind with light and form and color harmonies.

The intellectual acquisition of ideas is but a small part of the end of literary study. It is more important that we acquire a capacity of accurate observation and liberal judgment. The college graduate has often missed this fine fruit of culture and remains prejudiced and narrow in his views of things. Or perhaps even his college course made him so. On the other hand many comparatively illiterate men show still a liberal and cultivated mind. So that it is really not so important that we read, as that we read right.