

cannibalism, I suppose we shall agree with him; but if he means that the pleasures of the table and fashionable society are to be placed before

"books, poetry, music and art,"

I venture to say that he does not understand what he is talking about. It would require better argument than he furnishes to induce me to give up my Homer, or Virgil, my Shakespeare or Milton, or even his father's "Rienzi," for all the elaborately prepared dinners that were ever concocted.

I would say of my books:

"How sweet to me the charms of home,
To have around me many a tome,
Here to revel, there to muse,
Glean or wander as I choose;
Endless landscapes cross my room,
Fancy-decked in twilight gloom;
Autumn, Winter, Summer, Spring,
Wizard books, ye changeful bring!
Something apt for each emotion,
Love, or gladness, or devotion.

Ye at will give up your knowledge,
Such as may besit a college,
Or ye proffer information
With an easy salutation.
Some of ye are as a stream
In whose depths rare jewels gleam;

Admonishers of strife and folly,
Cheerers of black melancholy,
Gentle, most persuasive Teachers,
Or authoritative Preachers;
Comparisons full of life and spirit,
Mentors who no grudge inherit;
Suiting every time and season
With a rhyme or with a reason.

Books beloved, ye are to me
An unretorting family;
Ye, for each day's irritation,
Always bring a compensation.
How shall sadness come, or gloom,
While ye lie about my room,
Looking down from friendly nooks?
My benison upon ye, Books!!

Thus, having settled—at least to my own entire satisfaction—that books are necessary to our existence, it may be worth while to enquire what kind of books may be regarded as profitable reading, and to do this, it will be well to point out, to begin with, a class of books which are to be avoided.

It is not very long since I stumbled over the following paragraph as a review of "New Books" in the *New York Herald*:—

"Apparently, only two classes of books are in demand: Novels and Books on Popular Science; at least these are the only ones lately published.

"The novels are, almost without exception, bad. The first on the list is a novel of American society, it is called a 'Brown Stone Front.' The story is feeble to the point of frivolity."

A Philadelphia publisher tells us we would much oblige Miss D— by reading her latest novel, "The Gipsy's Warning." We would like to oblige a novelist so industrious, but remembering the pain of attempt-

ing to read her eight previous works, we trust the good lady will excuse us this time.

Another of these books about nothing, entitled "Driven from the Path," is thus summed up:—

"The dialogue is insipid, and the incidents and story are in every way commonplace;" and so on to the end of the Review

Of this last mentioned attempt at "*paper staining*," as Douglas Jerrold would have styled it, a Montreal newspaper informed us:

"This is a pleasantly written tale of American life. Like American life itself, it is perhaps a little too artificial, and in some passages of the dialogue what may be described as namby-pamby; but on the whole it is a vendable book."

One of these pestilential effusions is noticed thus, which I presume we must regard as laudatory:

"*Too Soon*.—The authoress gained a fair reputation by her previous story 'Patty,' and this one will in no way detract from that reputation. It is a domestic story, in which the plot is well constructed and skillfully worked out."

Now, I am sure that the *New York Herald* is a very low stand-point to regard the question from; but as I take it for granted that this sort of trash unfortunately finds readers by thousands, and if this opinion is the most favorable that the *New York Herald* can form, it is enough to make one pause and determine to do his utmost to counteract the influence of such reading by every means in his power.

Let me ask: "What possible good can result from reading such rubbish as this?"

And then think again that these books which I am condemning for their stupidity and their utter worthlessness on this account may perhaps be set down as harmless when compared with others of a more vicious character; add to this the flood of *scepticism* and *materialism* and all the other miserableisms into which our literature of to-day appears to spread.

May we not blush for the age that can countenance and support it?

Let me beg of you, with all the earnestness I can command, to *discountenance* the trash and to encourage a taste for a higher class of reading. To my young friends especially I would say that no profit in any shape can possibly result from reading such books as I have referred to, and the highest view to be taken of it is that it is simply,—time wasted.

Remember, it will not take longer to read a good book than it does to read a bad one!

It is said, "Judge a man by the company he keeps." Now, a man's books are his companions, and I would say: "Let me see a man's books, and I will tell you something of his character."

There are some who do not love books;—there are some who do not love virtue and knowledge, and refinement and happiness; but lovers of *these* are also lovers of books.

Let us for a moment glance at the books of two or three men who have made themselves famous. Did you ever take the trouble to analyze the catalogue of the library of Robert Burns, drawn up by his sons?