

ing powers at all, and much of the value obtained by reading is wholly lost. Read with discrimination and care the best books and you will soon learn to love the great classics of our language and they will give you perpetual pleasure.

Let me say at this stage, if you think that you have any dislike of poetry you must overcome it. Some people seem to have a profound objection and dislike of poetry. You will find everywhere men who read very widely in prose who simply will not touch poetry at all. Why? English literature is the richest in poetry of all the literatures in the world. Verse is the highest form of expression, and yet if you ask the average lettered man if he reads poetry he will, ten times out of twelve, answer you in the negative. Stranger still, the average lettered man does not truly dislike poetry; he only dislikes it when it takes a certain form. He will read poetry and enjoy it provided he is not aware that it is poetry. It must be concealed in prose and then he will probably appreciate it. The greatest poetry is in verse, and verse is identified with the very greatest poetry. Such poetry can only be understood and appreciated by people who have put themselves through a considerable mental discipline. Therefore, to enjoy the greatest poetry you must get rid of any prejudice you may feel against verse and instruct yourself in the methods of reading it. Once having learned the right way to read verse, no other kind of literature will afford you higher pleasure.

Understand me, I do not mean by this the more difficult poetry, the greatest idealists in verse whom it needs a concentrated study to master. Some of this verse is hard to all men and at all seasons. Dante, for instance, in his way, reaches to depths far below most philosophies, and consequently is hard reading. He is the most prophetic of all poets, in whose epic the panorama of mediaeval life, of feudalism at its best, and Christianity at its best, stands