

leave me, and we shall never meet the same again, I know it! I know it!"

Her voice, which had begun faltering and low, rose as she spoke until, as she uttered these last words, it rang like a silver trumpet through the night air.

"Lizzie," said Peter sadly, "you were the last one whom I expected to wish to keep me back in life."

The girl shuddered. She did not read the selfishness that was so apparent in his words. Love seldom does see selfishness, or, if it does, it shuts its eyes and will not look. She saw only the mote in her own eye, and shivered as she thought she detected selfishness in herself.

Selfish! when she was giving up her very life for him! Without him the world were dark, and the bird songs silenced; yet she had had the courage to renounce all claims to him. And he called her selfish! You wonder how she could believe him! Tell, then, why a maiden will lay her hand in yours trustingly, and walk out into the world's battle with you, afar from mother's love or father's watchful care.

"I never want to keep you back, Peter, in anything you wish. But you cannot live a double life. It is not I, but fate that gives you your choice. What do I care what you are or may be, if you but love me. My life is in the country. I love the green fields and the maple groves. I am happy milking the cows or working in the dairy. I like the quiet of my life, and if I had to change it for the city, I would be ground under foot like a flower a child drops in the crowded thoroughfare. And if you leave us, you will never be a country lad again. The city will dazzle you with its glare, and your lungs will lose the taste of the wind that kisses the flowers in the school-house dell. No, Peter, leave us if you must, but do not ask me to keep your ring. You may be false to me and never hear a word of complaint, but I will not have you false to your own honor and your plighted truth."

Yes, Peter, choose between the country lass and the city belle, between the sun and the gaslight, the drone of bees and the thunder of traffic!

You have chosen? Replace the ring on your finger, then, and lead your sweetheart home. Pray they may never reproach you, the one by her absence, the other by its presence, in the years that lie between you and eternity. You have been offered love, and you want fame as well. Be wary, lest in the years to come you lose the one and find the other turn bitter in the eating.

(To be continued.)

THE LOVE OF BOOKS.

Recently, on the occasion of opening a public library at Birmingham, Mr. John Bright, turning aside from the thorny highway of politics, strayed for an hour in the flowery by-ways of literature. And so straying, he fell to discoursing of many things natural in such an hour, but all having, more or less, reference to a central idea, viz., that one of the most precious gifts that God can bestow upon a man is a great love of books. Himself an ardent reader, his feeling in regard to a library is reverential, and his sense of the privilege of having access to it profound. A library impresses him at once with solemnity and

tranquility, while the liberty to consult the books he feels to be "something like a personal introduction to the great and good men of all past times." He might have added that these men, when thus approached, are always, at the best, never indisposed to grant an audience even to the humblest, continually saying their brightest and wisest things, and not offended, however abruptly the interview with them may be brought to a close. "A book," somebody in the last century said, "is an author in full dress; he receives your worship in his best suit, his new wig, and his daintiest ruffles." Considering who the men were, and what their attitude towards us, their posterity is, we may well feel grateful for the opportunity of consulting them.

But this sense of obligation can only be strong in those who have been blessed with the "great love of books," the value of which John Bright does not overrate:—"You may have in a house costly pictures and costly ornaments, and a great variety of decorations; yet, I would prefer to have one comfortable room well stocked with books, to all that you can give me in the way of decoration which even the highest art can supply." And this "love of books" he is right in regarding as a heaven-born gift. It is far from being given to all. It is possessed in a moderate degree by many, but as an absorbing passion it is far from general. Very curious it is to note how, in a family, one or perhaps two of the children will "take" to their books. The others are, it may be, mad for sports or pets. One will take a fierce delight in every kind of exercise or trial of strength; another in keeping animals; a third in mechanics; and so forth. But if the family be large, there is generally the bookish boy, who is never so content as when he has something to read, and leisure to read it. Some parents foolishly discourage this taste, as, in their judgment, waste of time, and apt to encourage a dreamy instead of a practical tone of mind. They are greatly to blame. The boy with the book is likely to give them the least trouble, and to cut out for himself the most satisfactory future. For what is he doing? On the threshold of life he is getting an insight as to the nature of the world that lies before him, and in which he must take his part. Somewhat of this he will learn from the converse of those around him; but how little compared with what books can tell him! That must be a very wise and experienced companion who is half as well worth listening to as is even an indifferent author. Where in his circle will he find one who has travelled widely and well, exhausting all knowledge of the countries through which he has gone, learning everything about their history, their physical conformation, their produce, and the nature and customs of the people by whom they are inhabited? From whose lips will he gather rudiments of wisdom, or be lulled by the music of immortal song? What comprehensive mind is likely to have stored up and to hold available to his use the fruits of all knowledge of material things, the outcome of scientific research, or whatsoever results from the operation of economic laws? Books are the storehouses of all this treasure, and the boy is fortunate who has an instinctive taste for consulting them.