

carried it, not as a burden, but as a natural accompaniment of a cultivated taste.

It is a suggestive comment on the present conception of culture that all this should have so largely changed. If there is one thing in the way of distinctively intellectual acquisition which educated youth of the present day conspicuously lack, it is a knowledge of literature. To be sure, boys and girls who now fit for college have to read with some care a few English classics, and pass examinations on their subject matter; but they rarely give evidence of having read much of anything else. Reference to the prominent characters or striking situations sketched by such makers of English as Thackeray, Scott, and George Eliot often evokes no answering sign of recognition. The wealth of allusion drawn from Greek and Roman authors is rapidly becoming a *terra incognita*; only a pedant dares quote Virgil, and only a specialist knows enough of Virgil to quote. The heroes and heroines of modern novels, deeply versed as they are in science and philanthropy and psychology, are rarely found talking about literature. With the market flooded with inexpensive reprints, and with elaborate critical editions of nearly every "classic" under the sun, the knowledge of the great writings of former times, even among persons apparently most likely to have it, seems to be in inverse proportion to the ease of obtaining it. Literary interest of a certain sort we have, undoubtedly; but it is only too obvious that much that passes under that name makes no vital connection with the literary life of the past.

One of the most striking, and certainly one of the most serious, manifestations of this changed condition is the ignorance of the Eng-

lish Bible. It is impossible to over-estimate the importance of the Bible as a formative influence in English literature. Its variety of style, its marvellous felicity of phrase, and its dignity and impressiveness early entered into the very fibre of our literary expression, and long remained there a potent force. Everybody read it from childhood, every one quoted from it, every one's memory was stored with its incidents and its forms of words. To this day the skilful use of Biblical phraseology and allusion constitutes one of the greatest charms of style. Yet there is only too much reason for fearing that the Bible no longer holds its ancient place as the chief fountain of literary reminiscence. The systematic reading of it in the family has much declined, and has already largely disappeared from the schoolroom. Few teachers of college classes now venture to refer to it, save on the assumption that their students know nothing about it. Among writers and speakers, the use of its superb sentences tends more and more to be restricted to purposes of hortatory effect. The greatest literary landmark of the English tongue threatens to become unknown, or else to be looked upon as of antiquarian rather than present worth.

It is easier to state the case than to indicate the cause or point out the remedy. Undoubtedly, the absorbing interest in physical science has done much to draw attention from the study of literature. The growth of the popular magazines, with their entertaining fiction and descriptive sketches, has drawn the reading habit in other directions. The use of literature for philological purposes chiefly, as in much university instruction, has turned into a dead body what was once a living soul. The modern scholar seldom