

meditating upon the final destination of all flesh, I look about me for a teacher and a companion, I find one in the author of "Thanatopsis," and listening to his words falling on the ear almost like the words of inspiration, I derive therefrom unwonted strength.

Among those who fill my shelves, there are many to whom I owe much; many who have taught me by their experience, and encouraged me with their exhortations. I love *the old writers*; those witnesses of the manners and thoughts of bygone days;—who take us back centuries, into the quaint old times when men in their simplicity of character were indeed but "children of a larger growth." When there was more charity in the world and less heartlessness. When men spoke as they thought and acted as they spoke. I love them for their noble lessons, their unceasing exhortations to piety and the consequent love of our brethren. To these am I greatly indebted, and hope to be more so, for the fountain of their wisdom is inexhaustible. With some of these I am intimate; with others, I hold frequent converse, and derive from all something valuable in the every-day occupations of life. Some abound with the mirth that sports with the ills of life, laughing philosophers, and some bewail the degeneracy of man, pointing out wisely the remedy, the better way, and each brings something into the storehouse of wisdom. Such are my friends, fast and unwavering, whom misfortune cannot affect; who in prosperity teach me humility, and in adversity inspire me with courage.

Ye pleasant books, that silently among
Our household treasures take familiar places.
And are to us as if a living tongue
Spake from the printed leaves or pictured faces.

Books, we know,
Are a substantial world, when pure and good.
Round these, with tendrils strong as flesh and blood,
Our pastimes and our happiness will grow.

I was reading the other day an old English ballad, written 300 years ago, and it told the longing of the author in these lines:—

"O for a booke, and a shady nooke eyther indooore or out,
With the green leaves whisp'ring overhede, or the street cries
all about,
Where I maie reade, all at my ease, both of the Newe and Olde,
For a right good Booke, whereon to looke, is better to me than
Golde."

Some one has said: "I would never call the man friendless who has God and good books."

"When I am reading a book," says Dean Swift, "whether wise or silly, it seems to be alive and talking to me."

Goldsmith said: "The first time I read a good book, it is just as if I had gained a new friend; and when I read it again, it is as if I had met an old one."

And so we all say, who have found out this lovely secret for ourselves.

Charles Lamb says of "Books and Reading":—

"At the hazard of losing some credit on this head, I must confess that I dedicate no inconsiderable portion of my time to other people's thoughts. I dream away

"my life in others' speculations. I love to lose myself in other men's minds. When I am not walking, I am reading; I cannot sit and think. Books think for me. I can read anything which I call 'a book.' There are things in that shape which I cannot allow for such.

"In the catalogue of books which are *no books* I reckon Court Calendars, Directorics, Pocket Books, Scientific Treatises, Almanacs, Statutes at Large, and generally all those volumes which no gentleman's library should be without. With these exceptions, I can read anything. I bless my stars for a taste so catholic, so unexcluding."

Again, Lamb says of "Thomson's Seasons" and "The Vicar of Wakefield": "They look best a little torn and dog-eared. How beautiful to a lover of reading are the sullied leaves and worn-out appearance of an old Circulating Library edition of them; who would have them a whit less soiled? What better condition could we desire to see them in? How they speak of the thousand thumbs that have turned over their pages with delight!"

I would recommend you to read an Essay on "Books" by Emerson, which contains a rare fund of information.

You will probably remember that the *Pall Mall Gazette* issued a circular inviting a number of eminent men to furnish a list of the best 100 books, and Sir John Lubbock's list has been generally accepted as the best furnished; but there were some notes from various authorities which are worth referring to.

Mr. Bond, the principal librarian of the British Museum, wrote:

"The beginner should be advised to read histories of the literature of his own and other countries—as Hallam's Introduction to the Literature of Europe, Joseph Warton's History of English Poetry, Craik's History of English Literature, and others of the same class. These would give him a survey of the field, and would quicken his taste for what was naturally most congenial to him."

We may note one or two of the most important criticisms:

The Prince of Wales very justly suggested that Dryden should not have been omitted from such a list.

Mr. Chamberlain asked whether the Bible was excluded by accident or design.

Mr. Irving, the actor, suggested that the Bible and Shakespeare form together a very comprehensive library.

John Ruskin's reply was characteristic and interesting; he added but little, contenting himself with the work of destruction. He wrote:—

"Putting my pen through the needless, I leave enough for a life's liberal reading. Of travels, I read all the old ones I can get hold of; of modern, Humboldt is 'the central model.'"

To Plato he added the word ALL; to Carlyle, EVERYTHING; and to Scott, EVERY WORD.

He struck out all the Theology and Devotion, with the exception of Jeremy Taylor and John Bunyan; all the philosophers but Bacon.