

loves reading, and who knows what to read and how to read, has in his reach the best gifts which life can offer. He need never be dull; he need never be ignorant; he need never be unprogressive; he need never know what it is to suffer from vacuity of mind; he may save himself from the numberless and debasing temptations of idleness; he need never lack companionship, and his companions may be the greatest of the sons of men in their best moods.

There is many a writer whose works have co-operated with every beneficent tendency which is at work for the blessing of mankind. On the other hand, there are books by the reading of which, were it but for half an hour, a youth may blight his imagination, and darken half his life. I would say, make a habit, as far as possible, of reading only the greatest books. The library of a friend of mine, remarkable for his wit and eloquence, contained only some dozen volumes besides his Bible—a Homer, an Æschylus, a Plato, a Horace, a Dante, a Shakespeare, a Bacon, a Milton, a Goethe, a Wordsworth and a Tennyson. I do not, however, mean that we should never open the book of any except the few immortals. We may read many books for information upon special subjects; many books which concentrate and sum up the best researches of others; many books which, though they do not make an epoch, and are not masterpieces, and cannot be in any sense regarded as works of great genius, may yet express beautifully and worthily the results of patient study and careful thought. Still the rule remains substantially true, that if we would be wise students, the best and greatest books should be our most habitual companions, and the writings of those authors who are most justly famous should be "our earliest visitation, and our last."

Avoid the habit of promiscuous reading. The indiscriminate devouring of newspapers, magazines and periodicals has much to answer for. It wastes our time; it dissipates our energies; it distracts the attention; it vulgarizes the soul; it weakens the memory; it fills the mind with undigested or half digested scraps and fragments of knowledge, which have little or no relation to each other, and which give the semblance of information without the reality.

Nature gives us nothing gratis; and without study, thought, seriousness and effort, there can be no such thing as intellectual advance.

In English poetry read Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, Gray, Cowper, Burns, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Shelley, Byron, Longfellow.

In history read Gibbon, Macaulay, Freeman, Froude, Lecky, Prescott, Motley.

In oratory read the great speeches of Cromwell, Chatham, Pitt, Fox, Burke.

In general literature the works of Bacon, Sir Thomas Browne, Addison, Dr. Johnson, Charles Lamb, De Quincey, Carlyle.

In fiction the novels of Defoe, Goldsmith, Walter Scott, Miss Austen, George Eliot, Dickens, Thackeray.

In divinity the writings of Hooker, Jeremy Taylor, Barrow, Butler, Tillotson, Robertson.

Nor is there any deficiency of great living writers, whose works we may study with profit and delight. Our age still rejoices in the presence of Tennyson, Browning, Ruskin, Matthew Arnold, Lowell, Whittier, Gladstone, Bright, Lecky, Bancroft, Lightfoot, Westcott and many more. In studying the thoughts of such men as these you will find delightful and ennobling occupation for the leisure hours of many a year.

And yet there are but a very small