

grow into enthusiasm, to stimulate our mental appetite, and inspire us with a love for books. Librarians who know their business, earnest teachers, good newspapers, and thoughtful parents may discharge, oftentimes, the honorable duties of a professor of books and reading. A wise friend who can make practical suggestions suitable to our mental vigor and grasp is our best help for the choice of books. Without such an one we must follow our own inclinations. The important thing is to have an interest in the book we read. It is better to read one of Abbott's histories with interest than to plod through a volume of Hume because we feel it is our duty to do so.

Those people gain little profit from books who are continually asking, what shall I read. If we have a healthy mental appetite, we shall be sure to find in these days enough nutritious mental food. We shall learn to be more select, and to discriminate in due time. At the dedication of a library in his native city, the gallant General Bartlett related the incident of a ragged street Arab, who crept into the Boston public library and asked for a dime novel; the same boy reappeared, a few years later, and asked for his own use for a rare edition of Shakespeare which the library did not contain.

It is no matter if your intellectual capital is scanty. The ablest students of books have begun on the scantiest capital. Webster knew Pope's "Essay on Man" by heart, for it was his only book while at work in a saw-mill one winter. "I used to smuggle a copy of Shakespeare into my pocket when I went to the fields at work, and read it at stolen intervals," says John G. Whittier.

In reading, as in everything else, we should be guided by certain general principles. They should be few and simple. The next thing is to apply these principles in our daily reading. With a little friendly help and encouragement, it is not at all a difficult matter. The aim and the will are the main things, without them our crowded library shelves are but rubbish, and the suggestions of wise men fall upon deaf ears. Allow me to suggest, in the briefest manner, a few general principles, which, if faithfully and systematically applied in our reading, cannot but help us to lay a foundation, deep and strong, for the studies of coming years.

1. *Read the ordinary works of common reference and quotation.*

Only such as every intelligent person should read, at least once in his lifetime. It is a kind of duty as well as a pleasure. These books are to be read as opportunity affords or as a recreation. Select only a few and the best. For example: "Æsop's Fables," "Robinson Crusoe," "Gulliver's Travels," "Pilgrim's Progress," "Vicar of Wakefield" and a few of the widely known and popular fairy and nursery tales.

2. *Read and consult a few standard works for general purposes.*

That is, for general and useful information - to accumulate a reserve fund of knowledge from which to draw for pleasure or profit, as occasion demands. This should include the common works of reference, as the standard dictionaries, cyclopedias, gazetteers, periodicals, etc. Learn how to use and consult these and other works to which you have access. It is an art in itself to know how to use, without loss of time, and effort, works of reference. If you have not already learned this art, get some intelligent person to show you. This principle includes the reading of the most noteworthy topics of current discussion. For instance, a few simple facts about the electric light, Russian Nihilism, the Irish Question, Civil Service Reform and other subjects. In short, read sparingly, and keep well posted on the live topics of the day.

3. *Read and consult a few works for special purposes.*

That is, read and consult works which help to perfect you in your special occupation. A mariner should study his charts and books on navigation and ocean currents; a carpenter, the latest and best

on his trade, and the musician, the best models in music. What-over your business, improve yourself in it by a systematic and faithful study of its best literature. If you are a student, the study of certain text-books is your daily occupation. Your teacher will guide you to your best helpers. If you are a machinist, bank clerk, jeweller, carpenter, or cotton spinner, some one older and wiser than yourself will only be glad to tell you what to study first to perfect yourself in your special work. Get once started and no more help is necessary. Nowadays books and periodicals are published on every line of industry. They are just as much tools for us to work with as if they were made of steel or wood.

4. *Read a few books for inspiration.*

That is, books to inspire you to do better things. Call them favorite books, if you please. All of us occasionally are tired of our daily routine. We get down-hearted, wearied and discouraged. At times, everything looks "blue." We need then the inspiration of certain books to encourage, cheer and sustain us. What are they? As no two of us are alike, so no two need the same kind of help. In fact, the same person feels the need of different books under different circumstances. It may be one of Whittier's poems, Irving's "Sketch Book," Mrs. Whitney's "Hitherto," "David Copperfield," one of Plutarch's "Lives" or Grimm's fairy tales. It matters little, if we get help, strength and courage, that is enough. It would be as useless to try and make out a list of such books as it would be to dictate what pattern of a new dress or coat to buy.

Let me simply suggest that the six following books are particularly suggestive and full of inspiration to young men: "Character," "Self-Help," and "Duty" by Samuel Smiles; "Self-Culture" by James Freeman Clarke; "Getting on in the World" by William Matthews, and "On the Threshold" by T. T. Munger. It will richly repay every young man to read and re-read these six books. They are full of practical help and wise suggestions. Besides these books and the writings of some favorite poet, young women will find a deal of inspiration in Miss Alcott's "Little Women," Mrs. Whitney's "Hitherto" and Mrs. Goodwin's "Madge" and "Sherbrooke." Here is the point: Have at hand for every day use one or more books which will make you stronger and better.

5. *Read books for a special study of some one thing, i. e., read for a hobby.*

What is meant by hobby reading? Let me explain. The need of a hobby is a natural result of our daily living. Most people are bound down to unrelenting monotonous work.

Rest of some kind a busy man must have and will surely take, if he properly understands the value of a sound mind in a sound body. Men of talent, genius and industry, thus wisely recognizing the urgent need of some kind of a change, and having learned from past experience the folly of an indiscriminate indulgence in the many frivolous amusements and popular recreations of the day, naturally drift into some special line of work widely different from their daily business. In other words, they seek for a hobby which, steadfastly pursued, furnishes them with the long looked-for relaxation and congenial occupation.

Aside from the relaxation of the mental and physical tension which a hobby affords, it must of necessity, if judiciously chosen and wisely pursued, contribute to mental and physical improvement. The reason for this is plain. It gives a man something to think of, over and above fagging work. He has less temptation to worry and fret over real or fancied troubles. A contented and hopeful mind, busily occupied, contributes in no slight measure to sound physical health. To this end, a hobby, under proper conditions, answers a most useful purpose.

The objection is sometimes that a hobby must detract from faithfulness or skill in work or trade. No more so than any other