

discursive thinking came, with them advanced the wider literature, with its histories to record the past, poetry for its passion, philosophy for its speculation.

The literature of the world is so common, so much a matter of course, that few, if any, turn from its pages to think what it is, and how shadowy, yet eternal, is its existence.

What is literature? Is it a collection of books? Let me ask of you a task of your imagination. We are told that when someone, who has been confined from the open nature-world, has gone back to the places with which he was once familiar, those things which were so common before as not to be noticed at all are as strange as, even stranger, than other things. The hills were not so rugged in those early days, the road winds with forgotten turns, the garden is too narrow, everything is changed. It is because everything has to be measured by new standards, and many things are thus brought into observation that were never noticed before. In such a way let us imagine we have come again to the old haunts of literature, re-exploring with an eye for the strangeness of the common things, and a perception of those we take to be its axioms. Perhaps the axioms of life are after all its greatest puzzles, and the seat of its darkest mystery.

Here is a mat of thin, white sheets. Around them is stretched the skin of a dead animal, or perhaps the web of plant fibres. There are black marks in certain lines on each sheet within—nothing more. This is a book! Yet look at those black ink marks again. Unconsciously your eye follows from symbol to symbol. I see you forget what it is you hold, the plant fibre and matting. For a spell is falling over you from those cabalistic signs, the white page contains ink marks no longer, but it has turned to a splendid picture, human voices are in your ears speaking from silence, you feel the presence of other spirits with your own. Is there magic in these modern days? The mystery of the books is the strangest thing we have, and yet it lies not in them but in us. It is along the mysterious lines of the spirit life that we find the solution to it all.

Then books are more than mere material; they are presences of Thought. And how they sport with Time and Space! The lights are thrown across the shifting ages. We can hear the English skylark in twilight heaven, and watch the conquering Roman legions shout the wild pæan of victory. We can wander with Jason into those silent, undiscovered seas, or stand in the roar of modern London. Here is Fingal among his northern warriors; there is the sublimity of Shakespeare. Dynasties of forgotten states dance out for a moment in their long gibbering line. A phantom Troy glimmers on the desolate Asian hills. These are the ivory keys—pass your finger-tips along and in revelations of life and truth the answer comes from that mysterious, silent, outer world into the silent mystery of a living mind.

There can be no boundary here. It is the Infinite and the Eternal. Time cannot hold us. We may be 3,000 years old, or even older. Away far "out of Time and out of Space" we watch the stars whirl out of their red cloud-vapors and the universe unroll and spread its glittering frame. Chaos is ended, earth begun. Listen with Milton or Goethe and you hear the jubilation of the angelic choirs, see glimpses of that light whose beauty pervades the universe. A flash, and all is over! The stars grow dim, the cold, gray twilight of creation falls from world to world, drifts from sun to sun. The shadows deepen—darkness covers all, and the dead orbs are whirling into the eternal night.

This is Literature, and this is the range of a scholar's vision. From such a one should we not expect great things? and yet, strange as it may seem, we find that his mind is not always cultivated in wisdom, nor has that harmonious development which bestows the greatest

power. Many a scholar with an experience as wide as history, and a knowledge of the most intricate questions of thought, mistakes the true object of life, and lives as far from the ideal as those in the more simple walks of life. For learning is not culture nor wisdom.

The greatest man in the world, the one whose influence will extend farthest on the long future years of history, is the man, be he learned or unlearned in the classics of our race, whose life is at one with nature.

Do not let the recluse imagine that he has the only way of studying that exists. So long as he studies man and the mysteries of his environment by researches in the archives of the Past, follows his history with the aim before him of a more thorough understanding of himself and his fellows, works in the past for the present—so long as he works with that end in view he is doing his duty and accomplishing the highest good. But let the scholar never despise one who has not looked down the ages to learn from the experiences of history. Just as there was at first for the first thinker of the primal age, so now there must be other means of culture, other ways of getting into the heart of things than by living in the dust of a classic past.

Turn from the pages of your book to-night as the twilight closes in and the shadows steal around the room, spare a moment before the lamp is lighted, and look out at the sunset. What is that to you? Is it a gray, western cloud with red daubed on it like some sorry attempt at a 5 cent chromo? Are you thinking, while you look away into that infinite expanse of a forgotten tense of some forgotten verb in a forgotten language? Now you can test yourself, how much harmony there is between you and the rest of nature, for if you cannot *feel* the beauty of that sunset, *feel* the solemn power that is shut behind those flood-gates of the day—and the deep of the universe asleep beyond—if you cannot *feel that* in your heart, the dust of the past has obscured your view and narrowed the powers of your soul's expansion.

There can be gained from classical literary study much of great benefit by a widening of the knowledge of human actions in different times and under different circumstances. If as the student reads he sees unfold before him the changing arena where the heroes of old time are in actual life, if he follows their doings mindful of the sources of action in ourselves, if he sees them transferred into the present by the power of thought, by every experience of the man he contemplates, he adds to his own. For him there is less to say. But yet he is widening his vision by one method; there are others left. Should he be content with those truths that other minds have drawn from a source that still lies open? Should he be satisfied merely with applying and realizing these truths? Beyond, around, within him lie the same eternally inexhaustible fields from which Homer, Dante, Shakespeare drew, and from which the future Homers and the future Shakespeares must draw.

And now with all the widened scope of knowledge drawn from such study, you cannot create one single idea, give to the world one single thought which shall "shine as a star forever in the firmament of life," except by the establishment of a harmony between your soul and the oversoul of Nature, a condition to which everyone can attain, but the scholar, by his broadened capacity and greater ability to receive, it will baptize with a greater measure of power. With this thought before us it would be well to think twice before casting contempt on those in the ordinary walks of life, who have never had the opportunity of studying things beyond the scope of personal experience, while we may be privileged to scour the universe. But let us not pause through sympathy for an inferior type, pause because we may meet someone there who is wiser and therefore knows more than we, who has reached unassisted into the heart of things, it may be in part blindly, but effectively.

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