

Many of us when reading our evening paper beside the fire have been greatly interested with some thrilling tale well-told which has enchained our attention, till we arrive at the end only to find with disgust that we have been taken in by an account of the virtues of "Blood-bitters" or some other magic panacea. We are coming now to the thorn in our own recital; but read on to the end. What we are going to say now, we say with some diffidence, yet hope that it will be received as it is offered, with the kindest good nature. But, *horribile dictu*, as dear old Virgil would say, the spelling! You would hardly expect a man to erect a very handsome house, who was ignorant of the uses of bricks and mortar. Neither would you expect a very good story to be couched in mis-spelled words and indifferently punctuated sentences. Only when the groundwork is perfect should the writer aim at embellishment. Surely a competitor in a literary contest should be above reproach in such matters. These may seem to some unimportant matters, but they make all the difference between failure and success. This is a gentle hint which we trust will be taken in good part. The FORTNIGHTLY is not by any means immaculate in this respect, but then we can always blame the compositor or the proof-reader.

Should our successors see fit to hold another competition next year, we trust that not *five* but *fifty* stories will be handed in, and that all may be worthy of a prize. It only remains for us to congratulate the winner on his success and thank the judges for their kindness.

CONTRIBUTIONS.

BOOKS; WHAT TO READ, AND HOW TO READ THEM.

Concluded.

"I have no time to read," is a common complaint of those whose occupations are such as to prevent continuous reading.

They seem to think, because they cannot devote as much attention to books as they are compelled to devote to their avocations, that they cannot read anything. But this is a great mistake. It isn't the books we finish at a sitting which always do us the most good. Those we devour in the odd moments, half a dozen pages at the time, often give us more satisfaction, and are more thoroughly digested than those we make a particular effort to read. The men who have made their mark in the world have generally been the men who have in boyhood formed the habit of reading at every available moment, whether for five minutes or five hours.

It is the habit of reading rather than the time at our command that helps us on the road to learning. Many of the most cultivated persons, whose names have been famous as students, have given only two or three hours a day to their books. If we make use of spare minutes

in the midst of our work, and read a little, if but a page or a paragraph, we shall find our brains quickened and our toil lightened by just so much increased satisfaction as the book gives us. Nothing helps along the monotonous daily round so much as fresh and striking thoughts, to be considered while our hands are busy. A new idea from a new volume is like oil which reduces the friction of the machinery of life. What we remember from brief glimpses into books often serves as a stimulus to action, and becomes one of the most precious deposits in the treasury of our recollection. All knowledge is made up of small parts, which would seem insignificant in themselves, but which, taken together, are valuable weapons for the mind and substantial armour for the soul. "Read anything continuously," says Dr. Johnson, "and you will be learned." The odd minutes which we are inclined to waste, if carefully taken advantage of for instruction, will, in the long run, make golden hours and golden days that we shall be ever thankful for.

If you have an hour to spare from your labour, give it to reading and the enjoyment of your home. Work up that spare hour to your intellectual advantage. An hour a day amounts at the end of the year to 365 hours. In that space how many valuable books may be read; how much pleasure enjoyed!

It is to be regretted that well selected collections of books are so rarely to be seen; for the most part they are made up of gaily bound gift-books, biographies of the celebrities of the hour, ephemeral novels, and a sprinkling of poetry, scattered on parlour tables.

But if it is intended to commence in a systematic way to provide the home with a library, I would begin with a few well chosen books of reference, a good dictionary, a good book on modern geography, and an encyclopædia, as a substantial basis upon which to erect a superstructure as elaborate and ornate as taste and money will allow.

If in a household the children be encouraged to find entertainment in curious facts in science and history, they will be less tempted toward sensational literature with its train of evil lessons.

Books are my friends; they stand silent and unobtrusive, until my pleasure calls them forth and bids them speak; and then each, according to the complexion of his mind, either arouses within me dormant energies, excites my mirth, or strengthens me with sound philosophy. Pleasant friends are they; speaking only when I will—always in season. Men of mark, too, are they all; men who have made a noise in the world, but their renown has been gained in the quiet paths of literature. I turn to the pages of the philosopher-poet Longfellow, and read "what the heart of the young man said to the Psalmist," words which stir the blood like the tones of a trumpet, filling the heart with new and worthy resolutions. He it is who discourses eloquently of the charities of life, rendering them abundantly desirable and their exercise pleasing. He is at once the sweet poet and the pure preacher, ever frowning on vice and encouraging virtue. And when desirous of looking into the tomb,