

enforced idleness. How may you occupy these hours to the best advantage? Good literature is, I think, beyond doubt the most valuable resource at the command of the young practitioner. Not medical textbooks, for the jaded brain, after a five years' course of cramming, calls loudly for a change of diet. Instead, avail yourselves of the great masters of dramatic and poetic literature, or take excursions with some of the standard essayists, historians, or novelists. Believe me, every moment spent in the society of such men as Shakespeare, Tennyson, Montaigne, Macaulay, or Fielding will repay you a thousandfold.

Nor is it only on your entry into practice that the resources of general literature will be found of incalculable benefit. There is no human occupation which taxes the vital energies more than the practice of medicine. In the severe strain imperatively entailed by close attention to a large visiting list, and the constant devotion of the mind to one line of thought, we have just the conditions most favorable for a premature breakdown in the delicate mechanism of the human mind and body. The remedy against such a catastrophe is thus cogently put by Sir William Mitchell Banks, in an oration, "Physic and Letters," delivered before the Medical Society of London a few years ago:—"The essay, the review, the poem, the incident of travel, the glamour of history, the romanace; these are the things that for a short, sweet, evening hour or two will carry him into a land where there are no querulous complainings of sick men, no tearful faces of anxious relatives, no thankless words of ungrateful patients."

Or, if you would hear a more ancient authority on the same subject, let us thus quote you from Langford's essay, "The Praise of Books": "As friends and companions, as teachers and consolers, as recreators and amusers, books are always with us, and always ready to respond to our wants. We can take them with us in our wanderings, or gather them around us at our firesides. In the lonely wilderness, and the crowded city, their spirit will be with us, giving a meaning to the seemingly confused movements of humanity, and peopling the desert with their own bright creations."

It may seem superfluous to tell you that in order to reap these advantages you must be readers not collectors of books. I have known some good men develop into the latter only. Better! a thousand times better! a dozen good books well thumbed than a whole library of uncut volumes, though of the choicest. Oliver Wendell Holmes, in his "Autocrat of the Breakfast Table," says:—"Certain things are good for nothing until they have been kept a long while; and some are good for nothing until they have been long kept and *used*. Of the first, wine is the illustrious and immortal example. Of those which must be kept and used I will name three,—meerchaum pipes, violins, and poems." The latter part of the saying is equally applicable to books as a whole.