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# The Wesleyan

Rev. A. W. NICOLSON,  
 Editor and Publisher.

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NO. 32

## HINTS ON GENERAL READING.

### LETTERS TO A YOUNG MINISTER.

#### NO. II. OBJECT. REQUISITES.

MY DEAR BROTHER.—If we were outlining a course of reading, you should strictly avoid encroaching upon theological grounds. Our church has, latterly, laid down good directions for probationers, which, faithfully carried out, will leave the mind, at the end of four years, both enriched with truth and fortified against error. It may be suggested, however, that, in beginning ministerial life, it would be well to form a habit of dipping occasionally into the old divines. Apart from the religious knowledge they convey, their style and habits of thought insensibly gain upon a preacher, and help to flavour his discourses with that evangelical phraseology which, while it is admired by ordinary hearers, is both edifying and comforting to God's people. Consult frequently the evangelical fathers. Have, at least, a few of the old divines always at hand.

Nor will we invade that territory which may be regarded as purely scholastic. If you have not secured a knowledge of the ancient languages taught in our academies and colleges, it may be sufficient to say that translations of most of the classics may easily be obtained. How far you should familiarize yourself with these in preference to learning the originals will depend upon circumstances, in regard to which only one intimate with your position and character can be expected to form a correct opinion. At all events, they are available, and that at no serious expense.

Your desire, as expressed in the communication which has called out these letters, seems to have this aim:—Finding yourself at liberty to devote spare hours to reading, you are anxious to be saved loss of time in the choice of books, as also to be benefitted by the experience of some one who has passed over the ground which now lies before you. At thirty years—which is near the average age at ordination—you are in quest of such general knowledge as will most directly assist you in filling an honorable sphere and maintaining a character for intelligence. Of books there is no end. Can you obtain directions which will enable you to fill up the available hours of coming years in adding to your stock of knowledge, without being subjected to the necessity of discovering that certain books are worthless, only when precious time has been spent over them, and that others are of sterling value, only when the opportunity for reading them has slipped away? This is your object; and in endeavoring to meet it you will remember that I have only one person's experience from which to quote—my own. Others might guide you in altogether different directions, and, perhaps, to better purpose.

Before passing on to our subject direct, let me suggest a few students requisites for carrying out our plan to the best advantage.

1. A standard dictionary. Webster or Worcester—either will do—to cost about ten or twelve dollars—will keep you confidently informed upon words of doubtful pronunciation or meaning. Condensed dictionaries are condensed nuisances.
2. Good maps—ancient and modern. The former you will require, as our geographical divisions and names differ so much from those of the ancients that you would be at a loss to trace an author's description intelligently by charts of recent times. An excellent modern map is "Johnson's Commercial Chart of the World." It is on Mercator's projection, presenting the world in full outline at a glance, dividing British from all other territory by colours, and furnishing an immense extent of information on currents, countries, distances and population. It may be ordered from England through any wholesale book-seller. Keep these maps hung up in your study for convenient reference.
3. Scrap or common-place books, or books suitable for retaining, in permanent form, extracts and references to passages, facts, &c., which claim your particular attention as likely to be of future benefit. There are several plans for keeping such a compilation and record; choose one having the merit of simplicity and compactness.

This will be for you, in subsequent years, a second memory—a store-house, in which the fruits of your industry and discovery may be preserved till actually needed. You cannot afford, in this short life, to work without profit. And memory will play you false if you depend upon it to do double work.

4. A slip of blank paper and a pencil. These are simple tools, but they are of great importance, especially to readers whose intellectual training has been defective. Keep the slip of paper sacredly in each book as it is being read; and on it mark every word, phrase, date or fact on which you are not fully informed, or respecting which you may have doubts. When the volume is completed, write out the words on foolscap, accenting their pronunciation, familiarizing your mind with new and elegant forms of expression; look up the phrases, and, in the absence of authors, enquire of intelligent readers respecting them; assure yourself of the correctness of dates, fixing them in your memory; if the facts be doubtful, dispute them till you are convinced. Examine geographical statements. See that you are correct. I advise much writing in this way, because no method so fully enables a reader to master his authors as he goes on, as this of subjecting them to rigid cross-examination by pen and ink. Should they provoke a sensible discussion between you and some friend of genial tastes, all the better.

I have to remind you also that your chief business in this life is with men; therefore, the more you can learn of their character, habits, temptations, causes of anxiety, and their dispositions generally, the better prepared will you be to guide and counsel them. To stimulate your own noblest ambitions, and to give you a clear insight of the human heart, next to the Bible, read Biography. There is infinite sacredness in noble lives. Keble has beautifully said—

"Not even the tenderest heart, and next our own,  
 Knows half the reason why we smile or sigh."

To afford a comprehensive knowledge of the world as it has been, and so reach the motives by which mankind are governed to-day, read History. For the refinement of your own tastes, the improvement of your style, and training your mind to mark and appreciate subtleties of language and thought, read the Poets. There are Poets also who have not written in verse, whose productions are as valuable in the same way, of which more as we proceed.

## THE OCEAN FLOOR.

Here is an end of all romance about hidden ocean depths. We can speculate no longer about perils in chambers of pearl, or mermaids, on heaped treasures and dead men's bones whitening in coral caves. The whole ocean floor is now mapped out for us. The report of the exploring expedition sent out from London in Her Majesty's Ship Challenger has recently been published. Nearly four years were given to the examination of the currents and floors of the four great oceans of the world. The Atlantic, we are told, if drained, would be a vast plain, with a mountain ridge in the middle running parallel with our coast. Another range crosses it from Newfoundland to Ireland, on the top of which lies a submarine cable. The ocean is thus divided into three great basins, no longer, "unfathomed depths." The tops of these sea mountains are two miles below a sailing ship, and the basins, according to Reclus fifteen miles, which is deep enough for drowning, if not for mystery. The mountains are whitened for thousands of miles by a tiny, creamy shell. The depths are red in color, heaped with volcanic masses. Through the black, motionless water of these abysses move gigantic abnormal creatures, which never rise to the upper currents. There is an old legend coming down to us from the first ages of the world on which these scientific deep-sea soundings throw a curious light. Plato and Solon recorded the tradition, ancient in their

days, of a country in the western seas where flourished the first civilization of mankind, which by volcanic action was submerged and lost. The same story is told by the Central Americans who still celebrate in the fast of Izcalli the frightful cataclysm which destroyed this land with its stately cities. De Bourbourg and other archaeologists assert that this lost land extended from Mexico beyond the West Indies. The shape of the plateau discovered by the Challenger corresponds with this theory. What if some keen Yankee should yet dredge out of its unfathomed slime the lost Atlantis?

### From National Repository.

## THE SEAL HUNTERS OF GREENLAND.

In recent years the use of the seal skin as a fur has become so very general that the hunting of this animal is now made the common profession of the far north. Many seals are taken at Magdalen Islands on the northern shores of the Shetland Islands, and on the Labrador coast, but the principal hunt is on the coast of Greenland. A writer in the "Field," a London periodical, vividly depicts the home of these hunters, when made merry by their return from their venturesome exploits. "Evening is the liveliest time in the Greenland hut. Then the bright lamps are burning, the kettles and pots (made of soapstone) all steaming and boiling over each lamp, the women busied chatting at their work, and half naked children running about on the warm reindeer skins on the ledge behind them. This is the scene going on before us. The seal hunters has just arrived home after his day's toil on the sea, and while he is hanging up his lines, his water-proof gloves, and other paraphernalia, a piece of skin is drawn forth from beneath the ledge and spread before him. Its contents, the small, dried fish, called 'augmasat,' he eats in silence, weary as he is. This is only a preliminary meal, an appetizing pastime, while the more substantial things over the lamp are getting ready—and it does not take long to boil seal flesh. After the fish he takes a draught from the water pail from behind the door. The skin curtain of the ledge hiding the mysteries of the lower regions, is once more drawn aside, and the skin with the remnants disappears behind it to join a host of the most heterogeneous articles. A good deal of talking, in the relating line, or in the chatting, prattling, merry-making style, is generally going on. What I remember most distinctly from my many visits and stays in the Greenland huts, are the stories and descriptions of the men relative to their sea adventures, accompanied by the most animated gestures, showing how the seal had first appeared, and then dived down on his approaching it; and how he (the hunter) had in his turn lingered behind till the animal, made incautious by the ensuing silence, again arose to the surface, and how the hunter, leaning back with graceful movement, showed how he resolutely swept a mark, took aim, and threw his harpoon and bladder-boat; how the wretched animal dived and came again to the surface and so forth. In fact, he paints the scene with the most lively colours, as we all listened with rapt attention.

### ABOUT WITNESSES.

(National Repository.)

We wonder some industrious collector of *Ana* has never given us a book about witnesses. The strange statements, extraordinary admissions, prompt retractions, funny mistakes, crooked answers, and odd distortions of the Queen's English, heard in the courts, would make a plethoric volume of amusing reading. The subjects of legal vivisection do not find the process so agreeable to themselves as it is entertaining to uninterested listeners. Mrs. Elizabeth Martha Selina Georgina Augusta Euham Burrows might not be pained at proclaiming that such was her Christian name, although she did not generally write it in full; but the old fellow who had "married three wives lawful and buried three wives lawful," would probably have preferred keeping to himself that a boxon laundress declined to make him a happy man for the fourth time in his life, because he was not prepared to take her to church in a basket carriage drawn by six donkeys. It was not pleasant for a young husband to let all the world

know how, shocked at his wife's avowal of atheism, he sent a parson to talk to her, and going to see how he was getting on, found the lady chasing the clergyman round the room intent upon flooring him with a pillow; and a certain false milkman doubtless considered he had been sufficiently punished by the jilted lady's frightful cataclysm as he went his daily round for thirty-five years, without the fact being published far and wide, when the vengeful dame departed life without the doctor's aid.

The immaculate elector who was sure he had not breakfasted at a candidate's cost, because he had never breakfasted in his life, always taking his morning meal in the middle of the day; and his neighbor, equally certain on the same score, because he had, twenty years before, made a resolution never to eat or drink at any one's charge but his own, had as little chance of being believed as the Scotsman assuring a Parliamentary committee that his countrymen were "unco' modest;" or the Irishman who swore the last time he saw his sister was eight months ago, when she called at his house and he was not at home. More careful of his words was the constable who deposed that a certain individual was neither drunk nor sober, but "mixed,"—a medium state unrecognized by the London barmaid, who laid it down that a man was sober so long as he did not stagger or use bad language; thereby displaying as much consideration for human infirmity as the witness who, called upon to explain what he meant by saying the plaintiff's character was slightly matrimonial, answered, "She has been married seven times." Euphemisms are wasted upon lawyers, since they will insist upon having their equivalents. Said one man to another, "He resorted to an ingenious use of circumstantial evidence." "And pray, sir, what are we to understand by that?" inquired the counsel. "That he lied," was the reply of the witness; whose original statement was worthy of the doctor, who testified that the victim of an assault had sustained a contusion of the integuments under the orbit, with extravasation of blood and ecchymosis of the surrounding tissue, which was in a tumid state, with abrasion of the cuticle; meaning simply that the sufferer had a black eye.

The witness-box is prolific in malapropisms. The man whose friend could not appear in court by reason of his being just then supernumerated with drink; the Irish woman whose husband had often struck her with impunity, although he usually employed his fist; the believer in the martyr to Jesuitical machinations, who recognized the baronet by the gait of his head; the gentleman who found a lady in the arms of Mopus; the impecunious wight whose money had become *non est inventum*; and the Chicago dame, who indignantly wanted to know who was telling the story, when the judge suggested that when she spoke of the existence of a family feud, she must mean a family feud—might one and all claim kindred with Sheridan's dranger of epithets. Nor could Dogberry himself have shown to greater advantage than Officer Lewiston, when, mounting the stand in a New York police court, he related how Tom Nelson punched him twice on the head, scratched his face and bucked him in the stomach, without aggravating him to use his club, because it went against his feelings to mistreat a human being, winding up what he called his "concise" narration with, "I am willing to let up on him your honour, but not altogether. The law must be dedicated; give him justice tampered with mercy."

The London policeman, who found arrears of fat upon the blouses of two men suspected of patronizing a butcher without paying him, would have smiled in scornful superiority to hear the Glasgow constable deposing that a riotous Irishman "came off the Bristol boat with the rest of the cattle, and was making a crowd on the quay, offering to fight him or any other man." "Was he inebriated?" asked the bailie. "No; he was na' in Edinbrough for he came by the Belfast boat." "Well, did he stand on his defense when you told him to move on?" "No, your honor, he stood on the quay." Were members of the force always so exact, the magistrate who asked a street Arab, before putting him on his oath, what was done to people who swore falsely, would not have had his ears shocked with the reply, "They make policemen out of em."

In a trial at Winchester, a witness, failing to make his version of a conversation intelligible by reason of his fondness for "says I" and "says he," was taken in hand by Baron Martin, with the following result: "My man, tell us now exactly what passed." "Yes, my lord. I said I would not have the pig." "He said that he had been keeping it for me, and that he—" "No, no; he could not have said that; he spoke in the first person." "No, my lord; I was the first person that he spoke of." "I mean, don't bring in the third person; repeat his exact words." "There was no third person, only him and me." "My good fellow, he did not say he had been keeping the pig; he said, 'I have been keeping the pig.'" "I assure you, my lord, there was no mention of your lordship at all. We are on different stories. There was no third person there, and if any thing had been said about your

lordship I must have heard it." The baron gave in.

Lord Mansfield once came off second best in endeavoring to make a witness use intelligible language. The man had deposed that he had not suffered any loss at the defendant's hands, because he was up to him. "What do you mean by being up to him?" asked his Lordship. "Mean, my lord? why that I was down upon him." "Down upon him?" repeated the judge interrogatively. "Yes, my lord; deep as he thought himself I staggered him." "Really," said Lord Mansfield, "I do not understand this sort of language." "Not understand it?" exclaimed the unabashed adept in slang; "Not understand it! Lord what a flat you must be!" A New York magistrate was equally incapable of comprehending how a police officer could be guilty of skylarking with a girl when on duty, until the "roundsman" explained that "skylarking" meant pulling and hauling, laughing and talking. More humorous in his way of putting things was the gentleman who said that a stock-exchange bear was a person who sold what he had not got; a bull a man who bought what he could not pay for, and that "financing" was "a man who doesn't want shares buying them from one who has none to sell." A Jew, speaking of a young man as his son-in-law, was accused of misleading the court, since the young man was really his son. Moses, however, persisted that the name he put to the relationship was the right one, and addressing the bench said: "I was in Amsterdam two years and three-quarters; when I come home I finds this lad. Now the law obliges me to maintain him, and, consequently, he is my son-in-law." "Well," said Lord Mansfield, "that is the best definition of a son-in-law I ever yet heard." It may be doubted if that legal luminary would have acquiesced as readily in a witness whose name was not to be found on the law list, calling himself a solicitor, on the ground that he had been soliciting advertisements for a newspaper for eight years; or held a bill-poster, who could not read, justified in describing himself as a professional man, connected with the press. Assuredly he would not agree with the street-nigger, who admitted that his calling was a low one, but still thought it so much better than that followed by his father that he felt inclined to be proud of it. "And pray, sir," inquired the learned gentleman, cross-questioning him, "What was your fathers calling?" "Well," demurely replied the sham dandy, "he was a lawyer."

A Californian declining to swear to the size of a stick used by one of the parties in "a heated discussion," the judge insisted upon knowing if it were as thick as his wrist, "I should say," said the badgered man, "that it was as thick as your head;" and the courts curiosity was satisfied. A less excusable want of recollection was displayed by a Benedict, who only thought he had been married three years, while he had not the faintest notion when or where he had made his wife's acquaintance. A woman never pretends to ignorance on such matters, oblivious as she may be regarding the number of birthdays she has seen. Forgetting that a woman should be at least as old as she looks, a lady told a Paris magistrate she was twenty five. As she stepped in, who the box a young man stepped out, who owed to twenty-seven. "Are you related to the previous witness?" he was asked. "Yes," said he; "I am her son." "Ah," murmured the magistrate, "your mother must have married very young." Mdlle. Mars parried the obnoxious query with a vague "H'm, h'm," causing the judge to observe, "I beg your pardon, Madam; what did you say?" "I have answered the question put to me," said the actress, and the court gallantly took the hint. The inquiry so cleverly disposed of by the famous stage queen was met by an Aberdeen spinster with a protest against an unmarried woman being expected to enlighten the public on such a subject. Finding that of no avail, she admitted she was fifty, and after a little pressure, owned to sixty. Counsel then presumed to inquire if she had any hopes of getting a husband, and was rebuffed for the impertinence with: "Weel, sir, I wanna tell a lee. I hinna lost hope yet; but I wudna marry you, for I am sick o' your palaver." She could be frank enough if she chose, like the gentleman who proclaimed, "Every man has his pawnbroker, and I have mine"—a somewhat bold assertion, but one that would not have been gainsaid by the bluff Yorkshire "uncle," who, pressed by a parliamentary committee-man to give his opinion as to the advisability of imposing a penny stamp upon certain documents, replied, "If ever you come to my place to pop anything"—"My good man," interrupted the horrified M. P., "don't think that I could ever do such a thing." "Who can tell what bad luck's in store for him?" retorted the pawnbroker. "But, my good man," exclaimed the member, "it is quite impossible" only to bring the response: "Impossible! not at all, not at all; and if ever you want to pop anything, and come to my shop, I'll treat you like a man ought to be treated. No penny stamps. I'll clap a handsome sixpenny bit of government paper on the transaction, in a way that would be proper on an agreement between two gentlemen."

(To be continued.)