

the first order. In a certain village the blacksmith had got hold of Richardson's novel, "Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded," and used to sit on his anvil in the long summer evenings, and read it aloud to a large and attentive audience. It is by no means a short book, but they fairly listened to it all. "At length, when the happy turn of fortune arrived, which brings the hero and heroine together, and sets them living long and happily according to the most approved rules, the congregation were so delighted as to raise a great shout, and procuring the church keys, actually set the parish bells ringing."

"The lover of reading [says Leigh Hunt] will derive agreeable terror from 'Sir Bertram' and 'The Haunted Chamber'; will assent with delighted reason to every sentence in Mrs. Barbauld's 'Essay'; will feel himself wandering into solitudes with Gray; shake honest hands with Sir Roger de Coverley; be ready to embrace Parson Adams, and to chuck Pounce out of the window instead of the hat; will travel with Marco Polo and Mungo Park; stay at home with Thomson; retire with Cowley; be industrious with Hutton; sympathizing with Gay and Mrs. Inchbald; laughing with (and at) Bunce; melancholy, and forlorn, and self-restored with the shipwrecked mariner of De Foe."

The delights of reading have been appreciated in many quarters where we might least expect it. Among the hardy Norsemen runes were supposed to be endowed with miraculous power. There is an Arabic proverb that "a wise man's day is worth a fool's life," and, though it rather perhaps reflects the spirit of the califs than of the sultans, that "the ink of science is more precious than the blood of the martyrs."

Confucius is said to have described himself as a man who "in his eager pursuit of knowledge forgot his food, who in the joy of his attainment

forgot his sorrows, and did not even perceive that old age was coming on."

Yet, if this could be said by the Chinese and the Arabs, what language can be strong enough to express the gratitude we ought to feel for the advantages we enjoy? We do not appreciate, I think, our good fortune in belonging to the nineteenth century. A hundred years ago many of the most delightful books were still uncreated. How much more interesting science has become especially, if I were to mention only one name, through the genius of Darwin! Renan has characterized this as a most amusing century; I should rather have described it as most interesting; presenting us with an endless vista of absorbing problems, with infinite opportunities, with more than the excitements, and less of the dangers, which surrounded our less fortunate ancestors.

Reading, indeed, is by no means necessarily study. Far from it. "I put," says Mr. Frederick Harrison in his excellent article on "The Choice of Books" (*Fortnightly Review*, 1879)—"I put the poetic and emotional side of literature as the most needed for daily use."

In the prologue to "The Legend of Goode Women," Chaucer says:—

And as for me, though that I konne but lyte,
On bokes for to rede I me delyte,
And to him gyeve I feyth and ful credence,
And in myn herte have him in reverence,
So hertely, that ther is gaine noon,
That fro my bokes maketh me to goon,
But yt be seldome on the holy day,
Save, certynly, when that the monthe of May
Is comyn, and that I here the foules synge,
And that the floures gynnen for to sprynge,
Farwel my boke, and my devocion.

But I doubt whether, if he had enjoyed our advantages, he could have been so certain of tearing himself away even in the month of May.

Macaulay, who had all that wealth and fame, rank and talents could give, yet, we are told, derived his greatest