

with Milton's spirit and learn by a detachment from the petty controversies of his time to gain some insight into him "whose soul was like a star and dwelt apart." Let him not murmur if the air of the uplands seems chilly and stupifying; let him press on until the magnitude of that great mind has assumed definite proportions, until the stirring power of its moral energy has begun to move his soul, and until the strong music of the lofty verse has sounded in his ears like the tumult of seas and the low murmur of streams.

Then let him turn to Wordsworth, reading first the shorter and after the longer works, which contain straightforward utterances of vital truths which we all should know. Let the grandeur and simplicity of Wordsworth's harmonious nature become apparent; let the charm of a simplicity which shrinks from ornament and of a passionate truthfulness be felt, and it will be found that a discerning spirit has entered into the soul, which leaves it no longer doubtful, who are the master spirits of time.

Then there is Shakespeare, who is above all poets in the mysterious dual of hard sense and empyreal fancy; who, if you take to him gently and quietly, will not, like your own philosopher, tell you you have lost nothing, but will insensibly steal you into another world before you know where you are. There is a certain note which is quickly perceived in the minds which are sound and strong.

This note has been caught by many in the study of the great masters of Classical antiquity, but it may be caught even more readily from the great masters of English, from Spencer and Shakespeare, from Addison and Burke, from Bacon and Raleigh, from Burns and Wordsworth, and Milton and Hooker, and Scott, from Helps, Mill and Carlyle, not to approach any nearer to the noble company of the living. And, as Sir Arthur Helps has been mentioned incidentally, let one of his wise counsels find a place here. "Every man and woman who can read at all," he says, "should take something for the main stem and trunk of their culture, whence branches

might grow out in all directions, seeking air and light for the parent tree, which it is hoped might result in becoming something useful and ornamental, and which at any rate will have light and growth in it." These wise words are well worthy a place in our memory, for it is only by some self-discipline, by some concentration of purpose, by realizing that this magic faculty is not a convenient device for passing heavy hours, but a golden stair which leads into high places, that any progress can be made towards the company of which we have been thinking.

Now we come to observe, more particularly that between an author and a careful reader, an intimacy is established of a kind which is rarely possible in the actual intercourse of life.

An author can creep into the soul, and is the more readily admitted because his approaches seem so silent and unintentional.

St. Paul, for example, approaches many of us more nearly than the preacher who addresses us every week from the pulpit.

Those nameless psalmists, whose writings have been preserved among the Psalms of David, are more living and speak more directly to us than the people whom we meet in the streets or in the railway carriage. We may pass the time of day and nod to a man every morning for twenty years and know so much of him as we know of that passionate soul who cried unto the Lord out of the depths, and "waited for Him as the watchman waits for the morning." But what the Bible is in a peculiar degree others are in a less degree. There is often even a touch of terror in opening a book, that a man should be able to come into this grappling connection with us. If his spirit be true, he can make us blush with shame, tremble and shed tears as we read. We take the innocent-seeming volume into our hands, and when we put it down we shall never again be what we were before. What a spell the writers weave! What a miraculous power he exercises! For the influence a book wields over us is incalculable. St. Augustine opened the Book,