

day came when I did understand, and now I thank the early practice of the misty past, which enables me to grope my way through the mists of the present, and in some sort to pierce the arcana of the dim, unfathomable future.

Yet, reading need not, and indeed must not, be all rote. A combination of three things is necessary to make the perfect reader:—First, a good model; secondly, imitation; thirdly, critical analysis. Of these the first two are the most important. There *can* be imitation without criticism. Can the young nightingale construe the import of the mellow notes she catches from the parent bird? Can the leaf rustling in the breeze translate the sentiment whispered by its fellow-friend? Has the Alpine cascade to be initiated in the analysis of sound before its silver tinkle makes faint echo of the mighty thunder of Niagara? These, too, read sweet extracts from the volume of Nature, because they cannot help it; and the child in turn will read because he cannot help it, provided he have a model and practice. I think sometimes we anticipate too much, expect too much. We raise a child on stilts, and are disappointed because it cannot touch the stars. And, again, I think we confide too little. We do not give the child credit for comprehending much that it does comprehend. Incapacity of the child-mind to reduce a thought to words is not always a sign of ignorance. It is more frequently a proof that the vocabulary is weak or unready. Knowledge and power of expression are two totally different things; but one of the best ways to attain to facility of expression is to read much. I object to a reading lesson, as a reading lesson, being made an epitome of history, geography, biography, grammar, and all the arts and sciences under heaven. 'Tis a lamentable waste of time. I

read first to improve my powers of expression, and then to instruct or amuse myself. I must first master the mysteries of verbal *l'égèrdemain* before I reproduce for the benefit of an admiring circle the substance of my reading in a dozen different oral guises. So with the young. I warrant, moreover, their reading amuses them and instructs them, mentally, though orally they are able to give no sign. If they cannot so profit, then the book is at fault—it is too advanced, or dull, and should be replaced.

We are so fearful, in these days of Mutual Aid Societies, that a child's vocabulary shall run ahead of its senses. We dare not teach a child the cabalistic legend "fat pig," till it has been to a prize cattle show to poke its diminutive finger into the obese flank of the savoury quadruped. No, we can trust nothing to the youthful imagination. On the same principle it would be absurd to teach a more advanced scholar the word "heaven," because we cannot place before him the reality, or at least a reputable *locum tenens*. For my own part, I hold the imagination of the young to be a glorious heritage that we are only too liable to overlook, so prosaic, dull, and commonplace have we become in the conflict of life. We are doing too much for our youth. We are inviting them to become academic milk-sops—class-room dilettanti—instead of robust, self-assertive, intellectual athletes. Far better to have a child revel in the glories of Jack-the-Giant-Killer, and climb a metaphorical bean-stalk to the child's heaven, than chain his immortal instincts to an historical date, or weigh his opinions to earth with the *pons asinorum*. These things, like sorrow and trial, must come; the trouble is, we introduce them in the majority of cases too early into the child-life. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.