

## How to Read.

*Written for the Review.*

However, to leave the cloudy region of airy generalization and come down to the practical and useful little details of earth, two or three common sensible rules as to how to read may help us. And first, I would say, never read a book without pencil in hand. If you dislike disfiguring the margin and fly-leaves of your own books, borrow a friend's, but by all means use a pencil, if only to jot down the pages to be re-read. Coleridge, as Charles Lamb tells us, annotated nearly every book that came into his hands, his annotations "in matter oftentimes and almost in quantity not unfrequently, vying with the originals." Second, the careful transcription of striking, beautiful, or important passages is a tremendous aid to the memory; these will live for years, clear and vivid as day, when the book itself has become spectral and shadowy in the night of oblivion. A manuscript volume of such passages, well indexed, will become in time one of the most valuable books in one's library; it is the essence of many others distilled in one's own alembic, and will be treasured by the literary alchemist as the housewife treasures her own particular pounce or *pot-pourri*. Of this practice we have numerous high examples; Demosthenes, so it is said, copied out the "History of Thucydides eight several times; Southey's "Common-place Book" extends to six volumes. But many books there are deserve more than mere transcription, Archbishop Whateley recommends "writing an analysis table of contents, index or notes." One man I know keeps a separate little note book for each work he reads. Third do not read merely for reading's sake, and thus be classified with those persons whom Mr. Balfour calls "unfortunate," and who he says "apparently read a book principally with the object of getting to the end of it." Such reading, to adopt a favorite simile of Macaulay bears about the same relation to intelligent and purposive reading as marking time does to marching: both may need exercise; but one is progressive, the other stationary. As a corollary to this, too, it is well to remember that there are multitudes of books unworthy of careful and entire perusal which yet contain much important matter. For these take Mr. Balfour's advice and learn the "accomplishments of skipping and skimming;" learn in short, how to "eat the heart out of" such books. Fourth, suit the book to the mood of the mind. Why take up the essays of Bacon when the mind is not fit for food stronger than the essays of Elia? And if the mind is bright, active, and alert, why waste its energy over books that require no thought while those that do, remain unread? Fifth, remember there are some books that cannot be read too much, others that cannot be read too little. But, above all, one of the best habits to form in order to read successfully and with profit is so to read as that, while the mind is grasping the meaning of the proposition then before the eyes, it is at the same time calling up, rapidly and diligently, as many as possible of the propositions, cognate, similar or contradictory which lie embedded in the memory, themselves the result of past research and reading. I can perhaps best compare this process to that pursued by a geologist who, while travelling along a road, is not content with observing what is just at his feet, but forms mental images of the underlying strata with which this superficial soil is connected. And I do not think we shall go very far wrong in saying that he will be the most intelligent reader who is able to recall the greatest number of such underlying strata. One excellent little plan too, I know of by which to master and impress upon the mind the matter of the printed page, and this is when the chapter or the paragraph is finished, to close the book and try, in the simplest possible language to convey its contents to a mind more ignorant than your own—if possible to a child's. You will be astonished sometimes to find how very clear your own thought must be in order that you may convey it to another. Lastly, let us ever keep in mind Bacon's most admirable advice: "Read not to contradict or confute; nor to believe and take for granted; nor to find talk and discourse; but to weigh and consider."—*Arnold Haultain in Blackwood's Magazine.*

## A Home Missionary's Wife.

BY MRS. D. H. FREEMAN.

History records the labors, trials, privations and self-denial of hundreds of home missionaries, but how seldom

is the faithful helpmeet at his side given more than a mere mention; too often not even that.

To-day memory draws back the curtain from the past, and I bring a few pages from the life of a home missionary's wife.

She was but eighteen when she took upon herself the vows which bind, "till death us do part," and, with faith in God and reliance on His promises to give the strength and wisdom needed, she took her place as the wife of a pastor of a prosperous church near her birthplace.

Life amid such surroundings was almost ideal. Husband, parents, brothers, sisters, loving parishioners and kind friends. She might well exclaim: "The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places."

At the end of eleven years a call came to her husband to become the pastor of a colony in Kansas, then attracting much attention as the battleground between freedom and slavery. Feeling that the call was of God, he laid the matter before his wife. Loyal to him and to the Lord, who redeemed her, she answered, "Whither thou goest I will go, thy people shall be my people."

She went out, knowing that this involved much of privation, for she had laid *all* upon the altar.

Can I ever forget my first call upon her in her new field? The house was a "preemption shanty" about sixteen feet square, made of rough planks without battens over the cracks in the wall. The earth was the floor and the clap-board roof the ceiling.

A single small sash gave the only light. Two beds (under one of them a trundle-bed) filled one side of the room.

A cupboard, improvised from a packing box, was in one corner, a small table in another, while various household utensils, trunks and boxes were placed to occupy as little space as possible.

In the centre of one side of this room stood a cooking stove, around which were gathered six little children, the eldest of whom was womanly little Maggie, aged only ten, who was carefully nursing baby Hugh, less than one year old. With such surroundings they were yet warm, being well clothed, and the mother's hands had covered the walls with carpet and quilts, that the bleak prairie winds might not reach her darlings. Without the faintest shade of embarrassment or a single word of apology for her surroundings, she received her guests with rare sweetness and grace. To this home during her first winter on the frontier, this refined and delicate woman, who had never known hardship or privation, cordially welcomed all who came.

The following spring the parsonage was ready for occupancy, a building of rough native lumber, unpainted and unplastered, but with *floors*, rough and unmatched, and one window in each of its three small rooms. This was her home for long weary years, filled full of labor and care for her little flock, for her husband's parishioners, the sick and unfortunate and needy of every class. No servant lightened her housework, no seamstress her needlework, no laundress her washing and ironing, only her own small hands for all these tasks!

The salary was not sufficient for the most urgent needs of the family, even when supplemented now and then by a "box" or "barrel" from the missionary society of that parish in the far-away East.

"The Lord knows what we need, and He has promised," was her reply to the question, What shall you do?

Once, blankets were dyed and made into suits for her boys, when the old clothing could no longer be mended. Again, she dyed sheets, with sumac berries, and made dresses for her girls. The mission boxes had brought a generous supply of these in former years. Out of their deep poverty the parishioners ordinarily were able to contribute for the support of the Gospel, food sufficient for the needs of the minister's family; the country was new and crops uncertain. Time came when the larder was almost bare. Once, when it contained only corn meal, sorghum molasses, and a very little bacon, one of the daughters "wished they had something good to cook." The gentle reproof was, "My child, we are only promised bread and water, and we have so much more." As the years passed, again and again came the Master's voice, saying, "Take this child and nurse it for me," until eleven jewels were set in her crown of motherhood. Each child was welcomed as a direct gift from His hand, "an heritage of the Lord," indeed. The last two of these were laid in her arms but a few hours, till He who gathers the lambs with His arm and carrieth them in His bosom recalled them. With unfalter-