

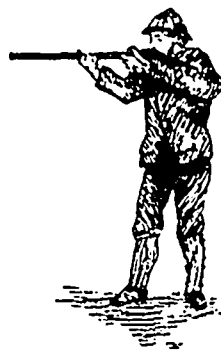
MOST young people who have healthy minds in healthy bodies, are fond of reading. Every one need not like it. There is no must about it. Tastes in this respect are as varied as they are in other things, and are as justifiable as they are varied. Tom spends his spare hours whittling away at boats. Charlie is passionately given to models. Clara likes nothing so well as cutting out and making up sundry little garments for her doll. Sam is blind to everything but a bicycle. Bella can't give up her paint box. These things are good in their place and ought all to be made educating as well as amusing. They tend to form quite as hopeful young men and women as the taste for reading. If you do not have a taste for reading I cannot blame you. But I can say you lose a great pleasure. You are deprived of a solace, an inspiration, an elevating motive,



which is worth an effort to secure. Henry Ward Beecher has said that "books are not made for furniture, but there is nothing else that so beautifully furnishes a house." So reading is not an absolute necessity for young people, but there are few things that make such good all-round boys and girls. Especially in winter do we value the taste. With no birds to sing to us, no flowers to smile for us, no fields and forests to converse with, what should become of us had we no books.

I have no hard and fast rules to give about what young people should read. It often happens they know better than I. When I try to make a list of books for them, I am too apt to make it a list for sombre fifty instead of sweet seventeen. But I know that the young like books about the young, when they can follow the hero or heroine through adventure and dilemma and imagine themselves enjoying the situations. In fact we all like in this way to find a place for ourselves in whatever we read. I do not think it is of so much import-

ance *what* our young people read as it is *that* they read. The great point is to encourage the taste, to acquire the habit. The habit will grow with the taste, and very soon we shall find that discrimination comes with the habit. I am not of those that believe that boys and girls deliberately prefer poor books. In this, as in most things, old heads come with old shoulders. But it is of much importance that a bent, a direction--be given to the taste.



Here are two men shooting. Both are doing the very same thing. They are using the same powder and the same gun. One ball will go East, while the other will go West. Why? There is nothing in the powder or in the gun to say how the ball will go. That is evidently decided by the direction given to it from the very first start. But for this direction, this turn, this guide, from the barrel of the gun, the ball might go anywhere. No one could tell where. So it is in our reading. The very earliest tone that is given to what we read and how we read, generally decides the after tone. The first direction, then, is the important thing.

Reading is but a means towards an end. The end may be to amuse or to inform. As far as the means is concerned I do not place reading, even well selected reading, on a level with conversation. There is something in the human countenance, in the interest inspired by eye meeting eye, that we cannot get from books. The next best thing is to treat a book as you would an intelligent friend,—that is, converse with it. Read it. Question it. Talk with it. Ask it for explanations. Do not leave it until you have all you can get out of it. As we all can talk with a friend without conversing with him so we can read a book without deriving anything whatever from it.

Now begin. It does not much matter what; but make a start. Be in earnest. Be persevering. Be regular in your reading. Choose whatever you are fondest of. If it be animals, choose one. If it be biography, fix upon your hero. If it be history, decide upon a period. If it be literature, select your author. If it be adventure,—begin. But remember that your reading is only one means towards an end, and that you have other helps which are of equal, if not of more importance. You have your eyes, they must be wide awake. Your ears must be open. Your mind must be on the alert. You will learn more by an intelligent observation than from most books.

Next week I will tell you how to form your clubs.

PATER.