

of Banquo, "as if the line would stretch out to the crack of doom."

There are some books of which we never weary, for they are fresh and new after the fiftieth reading. We never fathom them, for they are deep wells of thought, from which the bucket always comes up overflowing. Every time we drink at those inexhaustible fountains we are refreshed; every time we look into their unfathomable depths we are filled with awe and wonder, and are elevated thereby. When we open a real book we cease to be ourselves, we get into the author's sphere, and he literally takes possession of us; we see with his eyes, we hear with his ears, think with his mind, and judge with his understanding. He recreates all nature for us anew, and we are mirthful or melancholy at his pleasure. If we open "*Paradise Lost*," we are instantly taken away from this little petty peddling, bargain-making time, and transported into the dawn of a glorious day, and the beings with whom we come in contact are all of preternatural stature, and have a shadowy grandeur about them; and we wonder at the degeneracy of mankind. People tell us they do not believe in magic, and yet what magic there is in thus giving to "airy nothings a local habitation and a name"! What magic in thus giving to immaterial thought a permanent form, which defies the power of space, of death, and time! We can never be without good company if we have a few good books, for they contain the life experiences of the greatest men. We can have their opinion on all the great problems that have perplexed mankind. They are raised above the petty passions and interests of the hour, and talk to us with a sublime serenity. What a joy they have always been to the sad and the solitary! They have peopled the desert, and filled the solitude with aerial

voices, and introduced even to the shanty of the backwoodsman, company that a king might envy.

At one period it was our lot to live away back in the bush, where intercourse with our fellow men was rare, and save for the few books we had, the solitude would have been insupportable. But we were not without company, for

My cabin seemed a whole world-wide,  
Kings entered in without their pride,  
And warriors laid their swords aside.

There came the Saxon, there the Celt,  
And all had knelt where I had knelt,  
For all had felt what I had felt.

I saw, from clime and creed apart,  
Heaving beneath their robes of art,  
One universal human heart.

And Homer and Sir Walter Scott  
Came to me in that humble cot,  
And cheered with tales my lowly lot.

And Burns came singing songs divine,  
His great heart heaving in each line;  
A glorious company was mine!

I was the brother of the great!  
Shakespeare himself on me did wait  
With leaves torn from the Book of Fate.

They asked me not of rank or creed,  
And yet supplied my spirit's need:  
O they were comforters indeed!

And showed me by their magic art,  
Those awful things at which we start—  
That hover round the human heart—

Fate, ever watching with her shears,  
And mixing all our hopes with fears,  
And drenching all our joys with tears.

They showed how contradictions throng—  
How, by our weakness, we are strong;  
And how we're righted by the wrong;

Unveiled new regions to my sight,  
Transformed the weary winter's night,  
Into a spring-time of delight.