

to my company, and dismiss them from it whenever I please. They are never troublesome, but immediately answer every question I ask them. Some relate to me the events of past ages, while others reveal to me the secrets of Nature. Some teach me how to live, and others how to die. Some by their vivacity drive away my cares and exhilarate my spirits; while others give fortitude to my mind, and teach me the important lesson how to restrain my desires, and to depend wholly on myself. They open to me, in short, the various avenues of all the arts and sciences, and upon their information I may safely rely in all emergencies. In return for all their services, they only ask me to accommodate them with a convenient chamber in some corner of my humble habitation where they may repose in peace; for these friends are more delighted by the tranquillity of retirement than by the tumults of society.*

II. But it is time to pass on from the consideration of the advantages of reading—upon which, perhaps, we have spent too much time already—and to offer some hints as to the choice of books and the subjects of study.

Sir John Lubbock and Mr. Frederic Harrison have both written well on the "Choice of Books," and the former has given a list of what he considers the hundred best books; while others, again, have sought to correct and supplement the list. You will find valuable guidance in those lists. It would be useless for me to attempt any such work at the present moment, although I shall hope presently to mention some books which every one who can read at all should make himself acquainted with. But first it seems best to indicate what should be the general lines of our reading. And in attempting this I am thinking

specially of those who are leaving or have left school, since those who are still at school will do well simply to follow the guidance of their parents and teachers; and those who are at college will find in their studies and in their ramifications a leading which will be nearly sufficient for their purpose.

1. I would, then, first of all, recommend that, in leaving school, young men and women should, to some extent at least, carry on the studies in which they were then engaged.

For instance, you got some general acquaintance with the history of English literature, its origin, progress, development; and you made, at least partially, the acquaintance of some of its principal representatives. There can, then, be no great difficulty in carrying on your reading on the same lines. Take first the authors that you like, and then the authors that you hear of men of the finest taste approving, and teach yourselves to like them too—which you can generally do if you try.

Then, again, you probably learnt some language, or the elements of some language besides your own. Or, if not, you had better set to work without delay. The learning of one other language besides our mother tongue is really of incalculable value, even in making the structure of our own more clear to us. For this purpose perhaps Latin would be the best, but French will do; and although no language is quite easy to learn, and some are prodigiously difficult, yet French is one of the easiest. Many persons, however, find German more interesting; and, I think, for us who are mainly Teutonic, it is easier to speak German than French. It is a fine language and has a noble literature.

2. Another hint may be offered which is equally applicable to older

* Quoted by Sir John Lubbock.