

we kill our intellects—ourselves as well—and for such criminality no valid excuse exists. Long years of habit may have resulted in perverted taste, just as children fed on dainties are unfitted for substantial. We see the little ones crouched over their story book, burying heart and head in its pages, and do we realize all it means to them—that they people the world with these puppets of fancy, who become the heroes of their dream life? Do we interest ourselves in these same books? Do we know and care what the children read? Are we on the alert to greet every new volume which enters the home lest a most insidious foe creep into our midst? Rather do we direct, control and choose the reading, though the children be unconscious that we are the ruling power? They might resist dictation if they felt it, but let us live in their books enjoy them and discuss them, that the gems of literature may be household messengers in our circle. What accumulated wisdom would be the heritage of these young lives, if all their reading hours were spent with the best writers? And can we estimate the loss, through time misspent in muddy literature? For my own first dip into this limitless sea of nonsense, I was indebted to the Christmas present of a Sunday school teacher. The next year she salved her conscience by giving me a Bible. But my rescue was effected through the heroic action of a wise, brave father, who found me buried in the covers of trash, and calmly said, "Return that book to-morrow, and remember that the next one of that sort which enters the home will be confined to the fire." The best in all things is none too good for the bright young lives which form the nation's hope. They are the men and women of to-morrow. Where the refining influence of college settlement has affected the life of the Bowery, the street music of "Comrades" is replaced by Brahm's Lullaby; and if we would gain the spiritual help of a musical education for our girls, choice bits of harmony from Mozart or Beethoven will fill their repertoire. Let the simplest arrangement of a classic melody ring through the soul, to leave neither room nor taste for Tara-ra-boom-de-ay.

I use the word classic advisedly, for I would give the children only classic reading: not musty dead lore, but the excellent, the authorized, the living quickening power of fact and fiction. I would not banish childhood's precious legacy, the story book. Only let the tale be clean and sweet and wholesome—a breath of moral ozone, to uplift the thought and quicken fancy by a healthy imagery. The purposeless book is worse than useless. It is baneful. But it is a mistake to slap the child in the face with the moral of a story, and bore him with a sermon. The average child is quick and keen to discover all of good or bad which lies within the covers. How tremendous then the responsibility of choice which rests with the elders. Let us begin this course of classic reading with the infant in the cradle; and thenceforward to the grave, no matter how varied the subject, or how diverse the style, we may keep the same trend of pure taste and lofty thought. Why insult the baby ears with unintelligible jargon of deformed English, or with impossible adventures of Mother Goose gibberish? To soothe the restless eyelids into slumber, mother's need look no further than Tennyson's Cradle Song—sweet musical and nature-loving "What does little birdie say in her nest at peep of day?" And what dearer nursery ditty could we ask than Holland's beautiful lines "What is the little one thinking about? Very wonderful things no doubt." Would we hold the child enwrapped in hero-worship, fire his fancy by poetic thought, or rouse his sluggish spirit by brave deeds, the myths of Greece and the legends of Rome are our material. Faithful Penelope still weaves her magic web. Princess Nausicaa leads her maids to primitive laundry by the river. Virginius saves his daughter's honor; and Horatius guards the bridge alone. From the day when a child is old enough to hear a story, why should he not hear classic lore? Truth is eternal, valiant deeds imperish-