

several circles of acquaintances, so, when you make friends of some books, they refer to others in such a way that you want to enlarge your circle and include in it those whom they commend. It is thus of serious importance that, in our library as in our life, we select our friends wisely, for the charm of life depends largely on having friends and on having those of the right sort. Our books are not the mere implements of our calling, like a carpenter's tools or an accountant's tables; they are friends with whom we take counsel, and who, by wisdom or by wit, by fancy or by experience, by well-built theories or by gathered stores of facts, give us the best they have.

It goes without saying that even the smallest chosen library should contain some of the standard works that have survived the centuries. We might assume, even before we read them, that there must be marvellous vitality in the few books that have outlived the changes since the days of Homer or of Plato, that where so much was cast as "rubbish to the void" some singular merit must have been found in those that the destroyer spared. Time, with his winnowing fan, has left us very little of the literature of the far past, and we might infer that that little was among the finest of the wheat. Wordsworth says that "the good die young," but it is not so with books, or, if it were, many an author whose works are forgotten in a month might comfort himself by regarding their early death as evidence of their great merit. In the world of books it is the good that live long. What higher testimony could be given to their excellence than that they should be passed on from century to century with the approving stamp of successive generations? From among the works of those grand old masters, "whose distant footsteps echo through the corridors of time," some should be found on the shelves of every minister's library. So, too, from our standard English writers there must be a selection, be it large or small, else we shall wonder to what purpose the minister spent the years of his university course. If, in any of our manuses, you wished to refer to some passage in Shakespeare or Milton or Burns you would ask for these as confidently as you would ask for a concordance or for a dictionary. It may be difficult, and here it is not necessary, to draw up a list of the books that might thus be regarded as essential to any well chosen library, and in any such