

parts, cannot be taught successfully unless the teacher continues to study it as a whole apart from the daily demand of the class room.

For those also whose ordinary duties are less intellectual, there is in a still higher degree need of some kind of mental exercise. Lack of this too often means degeneration of the bright, intelligent youth or girl into the dull, common-place, harassed man or woman.

Lastly, our motto tells us that culture, however delightful, does not satisfy the deepest needs of our nature. It is the healing of the *soul*, but not of that highest self which we call the *spirit*. The best possible illustration of what it can and of what it cannot do for a man is to be found in the autobiography of that remarkable and highly cultured man, John Stuart Mill. Having learned more than we are any of us likely to learn, he yet failed to find a satisfactory answer to the question: Is life worth living?

The homely analogy from bodily needs suggested above helps us to solve the problem of *Right Matter* in our reading also.

A healthy appetite finds satisfaction in every kind of wholesome food, and almost every branch of study affords healthy exercise to the mind. But neither mind nor body can flourish on what is not nutritious.

All the books in the world may be divided into four classes:

- (1) Those containing bad matter, badly written.
- (2) Those containing bad matter, well written.
- (3) Those containing good matter, badly written.
- (4) Those containing good matter, well written.

The first of those four classes is quite without attraction for the educated reader, so I may pass it by with the remark that it is in the power of each of us to do something to keep it out of the hands of others, to whom it too often means that the ability to decipher a printed page is a curse rather than a blessing.

Concerning the second class, let me quote the words of a delightful author, known to most of us, addressed to a large gathering at the Liverpool Conference of Women Workers in 1891. Mrs. Molesworth there said:—"Do not be in a hurry to read a book just because everybody is reading it; do not feel ashamed not to have seen the book of the season. It may sometimes prove a very blessed thing for you never to see it at all. Far better miss altogether the reading of the cleverest book that ever was written than soil your mind and memory *in the very least*; far better to be laughed at as prudish or behind the day, than risk any contact with the mental or moral pitch which is so very hard quite to rub off again... To my sorrow I could name some recent English novels, written, I am assured, with the best motives, and supposed to be suited to young readers, which I

should shrink from putting into the hands of such almost more than an honestly coarse mediæval romance."

Ignorance and indifference as to the dangers arising from the third class of books are so common that I must dwell on them for a space. In times of old there was such a thing as "universal learning." Hippas in the days of Pericles, Scaliger in the days of the Renaissance, were veracious if not truthful when they declared that they knew all there was to know and had read all there was to read. Infinite as they are in reality, for those famous scholars the bounds of the knowable were strictly limited. The world is older now and knowledge is wider. When thirst for knowledge is first awakened in early youth, we vaguely hope to learn everything: we are "universally curious." But ere youth is left behind, we find out that we must be content to leave many books unread and many paths of knowledge unexplored. Let us then choose wisely what we will learn, for this at any rate is true.

Ach Gott! Die Kunst ist lang,  
Und kurz ist unser Leben"

Goethe puts these words into the lips of Wagner, who stands for a type of those who are content to accumulate any kind of knowledge without pausing to consider whether it is worth accumulating.

In a wider sense we must each, like Dr. Johnson's "Rasselas," make our "choice of life." For lack of resolution to do so, many drift on, and find their best years slipping from them ere they have accomplished anything. Others choose amiss. Have you never known men and women capable of doing useful though perhaps humble work of other kinds who waste themselves over worthless MSS, writing, though they have no new truths to give to the world nor any old truths to teach in a new way or to a new audience? The MSS replenish the waste-paper baskets of second rate magazines, their writers join the doleful ranks of "the great unappreciated" with a quarrel against the world in general and against publishers and editors in particular. Even clever men sometimes know not how best to use their powers. Did not Frederick of Prussia, greatest soldier of his age, carry reams of bad verses in his pockets?

If then as workers we must choose wisely among things worth doing, and as readers among books worth reading, have we not a cogent reason for avoiding both unprofitable pursuit and valueless books, since we choose both at the expense of leaving good work undone and worthy books unread?

Again, inferior writing must lower our own standard of thought and expression. A distinguished author once described to me his vow as a young student to read no book that was not *literature* for two years. At the end of that time he had learned