

Perhaps you prefer the sonorous periods of Milton to Shakespeare's wood-notes wild. You can recite, then, the invocation to light in the third book of *Paradise Lost*, or the song of Adam and Eve : "These are thy glorious works, Parent of good," from the fifth book, or the pathetic close :

Some natural tears they dropped, but wiped them soon ;  
The world was all before them, where to choose  
Their place of rest, and Providence their guide :  
They, hand in hand, with wandering steps and slow,  
Through Eden took their solitary way.

Is Milton ponderous, overweighted with antique learning ? No such objection can be urged against our modern poets. Great men have lived, and sung in our own time what will never cease from the music of the world. The brightness, the verve, the easy ceaseless flow of Scott, the marvellous music of the best pieces of Edgar Allen Poe, the Bugle Song, the Lotos Eaters, the Passing of Arthur of Tennyson, the homelier tender verse of Whittier and Longfellow ; what do you know of these ? Surely you can recite for us some of these songs of our own days. If you cannot, I fear you have missed much attainable culture. But it is not too late to mend. Begin at once to store your mind with masterpieces of prose and poetry.

Do not tell me that you have no memory for such things. You may have a memory enfeebled by want of exercise. But I will promise you that with three months of diligent endeavour you may so develop your unused powers that two readings of a piece of poetry of forty or fifty lines will imprint it on your memory.

You must begin by an intense, close study of some worthy bit of literature. You must examine its message reproducing the exact thought of the author in all its parts and relations with minute accuracy. You must then with equal microscopic care examine the form of the expression, metre, alliteration, assonance, rhyme, the structure of the periods, the appropriateness of the verbiage. At first this minute study will cost time and effort ; but with practice you will gain facility, so that you will be able to bend your attention on a passage read, with a comprehension at once wide in range and intent in scrutiny such as you do not now conceive possible. You will put more of thought into one reading than you now squander over a dozen dilatory and unimpressive perusals. Then it will have