

"If I were to pray," says Sir John Herschel, "if I were to pray for a taste which should stand me in stead under every variety of circumstances, and be a source of happiness and cheerfulness to me through life, and a shield against its ills, however things might go amiss and the world frown upon me, it would be a taste for reading. I speak of it, of course, only as a worldly advantage, and not in the slightest degree as superseding or derogating from the higher office and surer and stronger panoply of religious principles, but as a taste, an instrument, and a mode of pleasurable gratification. Give a man this taste, and the means of gratifying it, and you can hardly fail of making a happy man, unless you put into his hands a most perverse selection of books."

And Sir George Trevelyan, in his "Life of Lord Macaulay," tells us what that great writer thought of books:—"When I asked to what he owed his accomplishments and success, he said to me, When I served when a young man in India, when it was the turning point of my life, when it was a mere chance whether I should become a mere card-playing, hookah-smoking lounge, I was fortunately quartered for two years in the neighbourhood of an excellent library, which was made accessible to me." And again:—"Of the feelings which Macaulay entertained towards the great minds of bygone ages it is not for any one except himself to speak. He has told us how his debt to them was incalculable; how they guided him to truth; how they filled his mind with noble and graceful images; how they stood by him in all vicissitudes—comforters in sorrow, nurses in sickness, companions in solitude, the old friends who are never seen with new faces, who are the same in wealth and in poverty, in glory and in obscurity. Great as were the honours and possessions which Macaulay ac-

quired by his pen, all who knew him were well aware that the titles and rewards which he gained by his own works were as nothing in the balance as compared with the pleasure he derived from the works of others."

Some of these thoughts have been other expressed in a variety of ways by great writers; many of whom have dwelt upon the value and solace of books to those who have lost friends and the favour of the world; and such losses may come to all.

It is no utterance of cynicism or misanthropy to say that a time may come to any of us—however wide our popularity may be at any given moment—when we shall need other resources than the favour of our fellow-men. And what resource so satisfying as the communion of the best of all ages—a communion ever accessible to us in our precious books? It is a thought, as I have said, which has been expressed by many different writers in different ways.

Thus Tennyson represents the disappointed hero in Maud as exclaiming bitterly:

"I will bury myself in my books,
And the devil may pipe to his own."

And Southey, in tones of pensiveness and sadness, exclaims:

"My days among the dead are passed,
Around me I behold,
Where'er these casual eyes are cast,
The mighty minds of old;
My never-failing friends are they,
With whom I converse day by day."

Very beautifully have such thoughts been expressed by the charming pen of Petrarch:

"I have friends whose society is extremely agreeable to me; they are of all ages and of every country. They have distinguished themselves both in the cabinet and in the field, and obtained high honours for their knowledge of the sciences. It is easy to gain access to them, for they are always at my service and I admit them