

long, not to grant an audience, but to gain it ; Kings and Queens lingering patiently in those plainly furnished and narrow ante-rooms. I say this eternal court is continually open to us, with its society as wide as the world, multitudinous as its days, the chosen and the mighty of every place and time.

Into that we may enter always ; in that we may take fellowship and rank according to our wish ; from that, if we but once enter it, we can never become outcast but by our own fault. And here I may say I believe there is nothing more wonderful than a book. A message to us from the dead, from human souls we never saw ; who lived perhaps thousands of miles away ; and yet these, on these little slips of paper, speak to us, amuse us, vivify us, teach us, comfort us, and open their hearts to us as brothers.

Mr. Ruskin has given us the following wise and beautiful words about books: "If a book is worth reading, it is worth buying. No book is worth anything which is not worth much ; nor is it serviceable until it has been read and re-read ; and loved and loved again ; and marked so that you can refer to the passages you want in it, as a soldier can seize the weapon he needs in an armory, or a house wife brings the spice she needs from her store."

Bread of flour is good, but there is bread sweet as honey, if we would but eat it, in a good books ; and the family must be poor indeed that cannot for such multipliable barley loaves pay their baker's bills. We call ourselves a rich nation, and yet we are filthy and foolish enough to thumb each others books out of circulating libraries."

These pearls of truth by Mr. Ruskin are worthy of being treasured in the memory.

I hold, however, that many of us are richer than we think. The poorest of us has property, the value of which is almost boundless ; but there is not one of us who might not so till that property as to make it yield tenfold more. Our books, gardens, families, societies, friends, talk, music, art, poetry, scenery, might all bring

forth to us far greater enjoyment and improvement, if we tried to squeeze the very utmost out of them.

What is unseen forms the real value of the book ; the type, the paper, the binding are all visible ; but the soul that conceived it, the mind that arranged it, the hand that wrote it, the associations that cling to it, are the invisible links in a long chain of thought, effort and history which make the book what it is to us. The love of books is the good angel that keeps watch by the poor man's hearth and hallows it ; saving him from the temptations that lurk beyond its charmed circle and lifting him, as it were, from the more mechanical drudgery of his every day occupation. The wife blesses it as she sits smiling and sewing, alternately listening to her husband's voice, or hushing the child upon her knee. She blesses it for keeping him near her, and making him manly and kind hearted.

There are books which forcibly recall calm and tranquil scenes of bygone happiness. We hear again the gentle tones of a voice long since hushed. We can remember the very passage where the reader paused awhile to play the critic, or where that eloquent voice suddenly faltered, and we all laughed to find ourselves weeping and were sorry when the tale came to an end.

Books read for the first time at some particular place or period of our existence may thus become hallowed forever ; or, we love them because others loved them also in bygone days.

Rev. Dr. Collyer thus describes his early fondness for books : "I could not go home for the Christmas of 1839, and was feeling very sad about it all, for I was only a boy ; and, sitting by the fire, an old farmer came in, and said : 'I notice thou art fond of reading, and so I brought thee summat to read.' It was Irving's Sketch Book ; I had never heard of the work. I went at it, and was 'as then in a dream.' No such delight had touched me since the old days of Crusoe. I saw the Hudson and the Catskills, took poor Rip at once to my heart, as everybody has,