

reading is the key to a liberal education, nay more, to a universal knowledge: the knowledge of the living world in which we dwell, of the dead world which lies behind us, of the world yet to be, which, like the visible horizon, seems ever before us, never reached, for the morrow is in a sense unattainable, 'tis always *now*.

Few out of the busy multitudes care to dwell among the stars, or swing like Mohammed's coffin, suspended in the cradle of the earth's gravity. Few care to deal with metaphysical abstractions or indeterminate problems, whether mathematical or philosophical; but read man must, to know others, to know himself, to glean from others' experience, so as to anticipate in some measure, the obligations, the wants and the possible conditions of time to come. Our first utterance is a word, not a formula; our closing lips syllable a farewell, they postulate not an equation. "Light, more light" is the watchword of the ages, and that light must come, so far as we are able to judge, if it ever do come, through the medium of written speech; for, granting that the riddle be at length solved by the few, through scientific research, that solution must be imparted to the many through the medium of books, for all men are not discoverers, neither are they contemporaries. A good book is a lamp to the feet of those who walk in the highway of knowledge, while the power to use it aright is a boon second only to the gift of reason itself.

It is an indisputable fact that the most shallow, the most worldly, the most neglected of humanity, if able to spell through a page of print, will be occasionally found poring over their Bible, their newspaper, or their sheet ballads. Even a child finds pleasure in spelling out a name or memorizing a nursery jingle. I think the reason is obvious. Humanity in its simpler

stages naturally takes to what it can understand; therefore it is that the masses are so fond of pictures, these appeal directly to their senses. Well, literature is simply a succession of verbal pictures, transferred through the medium of words to the mind-canvas, there reproducing, by a slightly different process to that of the brush, the fashions, the figures, the characteristics of all ages and all nations of society. To tell me, a simple bread-winner, that the square of the sum of two numbers is equal to the sum of the squares of the two numbers and twice their product, or that the product of the extremes in a proportion is equal to the product of the means, however true these statements may be in the abstract, is to tell me nothing. They are messages in cypher and space, and the eternal verities to finite time and understanding; but to read to me "Robinson Crusoe" is to reproduce for me the freshness of the green woods of earth, the balmy air of the heavens, the tints of the arching sky, the bloom of the green sward, the foam of the restless sea, the scenes I know or can, at least, imagine and love. I exist in Nature surrounded by her offspring and her voices; I do not live in an equilateral triangle bounded by straight lines and my mind refuses to be so circumscribed. With Crusoe I am at home. Here Nature appeals instinctively to her child. My untrained eyes cannot bear the blinding light of the great indeterminate sun; but I can lay my head on the lap of earth and close my eyes in slumber to realize in dreams the sights, the sounds, the odours and the sensations I realized when awake. In this respect, I am like honest Gabriel Betteredge, house-steward to Julia, Lady Verinder, and can swear by "Robinson Crusoe:" "You are welcome to be as merry as you please over everything else I have written; but when I write of 'Robinson Crusoe,'