

predecessors. Most of the learning of the present generation was bequeathed by an ancestry which likewise built on foundations left by those who had gone before them. The work of our contemporary authors serves us for diversion and amusement, but will hardly go down as a profitable legacy to the next generation. The new-bookmakers are so busy now, and they crowd upon us volume after volume in such rapid succession that we find but little time to glean the rich harvest that the reapers have left behind, in their haste to get their crops to the market. Millions of people read quite complacently works whose literary merits are so small that they are intolerable to any who have the least sense of style. Yet this defect does not affect their popularity. Some men write with the end of a broomstick, some with a gold pen, some with an etcher's needle. The broomstick man is perhaps the most popular. Then people read books just as they look at a picture or go to a play, "for the story." That is all they care about. The story read, they dismiss it from their thoughts. Over-much reading and promiscuous reading are great hindrances to the formation of a critical habit. The critic does not gulp, he tastes; he discriminates between Hamburg sherry and the true wines of Xeres by the aid of a wine-glass, not a tumbler. But the omnivorous reader is like unto one who takes his draught from a quart pot. Fancy a city dinner at which pea soup, tripe and onions, fried fish, roast pork and stuffing, raw onions, and such viands were served up side by side with the most delicate preparation; where thick-sugared stout was handed round with *Johannisberg*, and *Piper tres sec*; fancy the guests indiscriminately taking one after the other, without discernment, enjoying one quite as much as the other, with a leaning in the direction of roast pork and stout—that, if you please, is a fair example of the intellectual meal taken continually by the all-devouring reader. He reads everything; he reads whatever is set before him; he reads without consi-