

ideal of what they ought to be is set before them, and they are stirred up to realize it. Such novels are not numerous, but they exist. Take Kingsley's "Westward Ho" and "Two Years Ago," and Mrs. Rundle Charles' "Joan the Maid." We may gain much from such good novels, given two conditions: (a) That we do not read too many. While repetition strengthens our active energies, it weakens our emotional impressions. The more you read, the less you will enjoy. (b) That we do not read for mere amusement. What was seriously written may be seriously read, and how seriously the best fiction is written we see in the biography of the author of "Westward Ho."

Turning from fiction to theology, we cannot leave unnamed that body of religious literature which we all have, which is at once most ancient and yet ever new, awaking the delight of the child and the awed admiration of the giant in intellect. Its name of *Bible* is an acknowledgment that it is *the* Book; the man who knows it only is educated in the highest sense; the man who does not know it has missed the best thing that Literature has to offer us.

There are two ways in which we may fail to reap from it the rich harvest that may be reaped. If, looking at it only on its human side, we read with the cold superiority of the critic who ignores man's spiritual needs and denies that such needs can find satisfaction, and forgets (if I may for the third time refer to "Sesame and Lilies") "that no syllable of that great Book was ever yet to be understood but through a deed," we miss again and again meanings that are obvious to many a simple soul who does not know what "criticism" is.

If again, looking at it only on its divine side, we read it in that devout but wholly unnatural way that ignores altogether that it is History and Literature, we turn a divine banquet into a feast of scraps, and in the end miss even the spiritual edification that we might have gained.

What is needed is a combination of thorough and intelligent study, with the enlightened heart of that French lady who, when asked why she believed in the divinity of the Bible, answered: "Because I have become acquainted with the Author."

Lastly we turn to the consideration of *Right Method* in our reading. We may possess good books we may read them, and yet we may be little the better because we read amiss. It is an old saying that he who would bring the wealth of the Indies thence must take it thither. What we get from a book largely depends upon what we put into it. Unless we are in some sympathy with the author, we shall misunderstand, as did the mathematician who laid down "Paradise Lost" with the comment that he found in it a great deal of assertion and very little proof.

Thomas Fuller tells a delicious story of a rich and unlearned owner of many books entering the bare room of a poor student with this greeting: "Salve doctor, sine libris!" When the visit was returned, the student glanced round the well filled shelves, and said quietly: "Salvete libri, sine doctore!"

Take Bacon's Essay "Of Studies" for many wise and weighty words on methods in reading. "Non multas sed multum" is an excellent motto here. Those whose culture has been of the highest type have often been *students* of a few first rate books rather than *readers* of a great many, good bad and indifferent. One book mastered is worth far more than twenty skimmed. There is in the world more curiosity to know what is said on a subject than to know the truth about it, and satisfaction of the former curiosity leaves us little the wiser.

Mr. Gladstone tells us that he has been mainly influenced by four authors: S. Augustine, Bishop Butler, Aristotle and Dante.

Archdeacon Farrar would give young people five "best books" to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest: "The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius, Thomas à Kempis," "Imitatio Christi," Dante, Shakespeare and Milton.

Lowell names five indispensable authors: Homer, Dante, Cervantes, Goethe (*i.e.*, Faust) and Shakespeare.

Short as these lists are, each includes books of widely different ages and races. The battle between ancient and modern books which Swift described is best made a drawn game by availing ourselves of both.

Another reason for aiming at few rather than many is that a book worth reading is worth reading three times: 1st, that we may know it; 2nd, that we may understand it; 3rd, that we may store it up.

Once again let us lay to heart this wise maxim: "A word unknown is a sentence misunderstood!" and let us not be ashamed of minute accuracy and of frequently turning to the dictionary, especially the etymological dictionary, in the study of our own language as well as of other languages.

It is a real help, to young readers particularly, to keep a list of all books read. The record of our choice of books confronts us and shames us into making it a good one. Exact statements of title and author's name are also useful for future reference.

Finally, whatever the views of our author are, and we have agreed to leave altogether unread those books whose tendency we *know* to be harmful, let us not read him for the first time in that critical attitude that is so delightful to the half learned.

"We get no good
By being ungenerous, even to a book,
And calculating profits—so much help