

although it is good-natured, is nevertheless a very serious obstacle to a satisfactory settlement.

Hoping that you may consider it worth while to publish this rather unfinished suggestion,

I remain,

Yours faithfully,

S. CARMICHAEL.

CONTRIBUTIONS

THE RIGHT USE OF BOOKS.

LECTURE TO THE DELTA SIGMA SOCIETY OF
MCGILL UNIVERSITY BY MRS. ASHLEY CARUS-
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"The time has come," said the Mistress of Girton College, Cambridge, to me lately, "when the average girl goes to College." That means that the opportunities of higher culture, which Canada has so promptly followed the lead of the Old Country in offering to her women, are frankly recognized as fitting the exceptional woman for exceptional work, in some cases, and in many more cases as fitting the average woman for what is not only the most ancient but also the most common and withal the most honorable vocation that a woman can have, the vocation of homemaker. I propose therefore to speak of the right use of books, as it concerns not the learned literary woman, but the woman who finds time for the duty and pleasure of reading among many other occupations.

Right use of books means *right motive, right matter and right method* in our reading, which we will deal with in order.

Think of the last book you read, and ask yourself quite honestly this question: "Why did I read it?" Will any of these answers be yours: "Because I was asked to read it. Because I was expected to read it. Because I wanted to keep up my reputation as well-informed and studious. Because I had heard the book talked of, and I wanted to be able to talk of it also. Because the book looked amusing, and I wished for some amusement." I do not say that reasons such as these ought not to account for reading in the sense of glancing through published matter as we glance through a newspaper. But ought they to account for any reading worth lecturing about?

The true reason for reading in the true sense is well suggested in one of the happy mottoes graven in the windows of the Library given to McGill University by the late Mr. Peter Redpath. It consists of but two words, *ψυχῆς ἰατρείον*, "healing of the soul," which we may take in the larger sense of *keeping* in health rather than the smaller sense of *restoring* to health. You

dined and walked out yesterday, because you wished to keep your body healthy by means of nourishment and exercise. Now, the mind like the body has a twofold need of nourishment and exercise. Would you plead exemption from your dinners and walks of this week because you dined and walked regularly some years ago? How then can you shape this excuse: "I read regularly in my schooldays or in my first year of leisure when school and college days were at an end. Now I have many other things to do, and may forego the habit."

I cannot say too strongly to those whose college days are not in the past tense: "Use to the uttermost your present opportunity for strenuous study. It will be over all too soon, and it will never occur again." And to those for whom "the trivial round, the common task" have once for all limited that opportunity, I would say: "Never resign yourself to the thought that for you intellectual pursuits, however delightful, are things of the past." Starvation is a slow process, with imperceptible stages. Up to a certain point, mind and body may be left without food. Nature in both cases wards off inevitable consequences by using up the results of past nutrition. For a time we continue to exist if we cannot be said to live; but it is for a time only. Nor can the frame that is constantly passive retain its vigor and agility. We do take to heart the fact that we dare not leave our bodies unnourished and unexercised. At the cost of thought and effort, let us take to heart the equally certain fact that we dare not leave our minds unnourished and unexercised either.

You may reply: "My mind is already fully exercised with some regular work of teaching, writing or correspondence. Is not this enough?"

Let a writer and a teacher answer the question. A well-known journalist tells us that although his daily employment is wholly intellectual, he makes a principle of devoting one morning hour always to some "solid" book not immediately connected with his writing. One of the greatest teachers who ever lived writes thus to a friend and pupil:—"I am satisfied that a neglected intellect is far oftener the cause of mischief to a man than a perverted or over-valued one!.....I hold that a man is only fit to teach so long as he is himself learning daily. If the mind once becomes stagnant, it can give no fresh draught to another mind; it is drinking out of a pond instead of a spring."—(*Life and Letters of Dr. Arnold of Rugby, Vol. II., p. 85.*)

To the busy teacher especially comes the temptation to live from hand-to-mouth intellectually; to teach what was learned long ago as it was learned then; or to take in merely what must be given out immediately. We need to remind ourselves continually that parts of a subject, even its elementary