

Well might Charles Lamb suggest that we should say grace "over the table spread with good books."

Besides the class of books that adds to our store of facts and principles there is another class very useful because of its power to touch the imagination and the emotions. We read partly to add to our store of definite knowledge and partly to instruct our impulses, and to strengthen ourselves in fine and noble tempers. We love those books which appeal to our hearts as well as those which appeal to our reason. "They move us, inspire us, console us; they make life less difficult, and its drudgeries more endurable, they trouble the waters of sympathy within us, and keep them from stagnation; they enlarge our interests, quicken our emotions and drop the golden haze of the ideal over the grey monotonies of a leaden and prosaic life." It is this strong appeal to the heart that gives to poetry its greatest value. George Wm. Curtis has truthfully said, "Until we know why the rose is sweet or the dew drop is pure, or the rainbow beautiful, we cannot know why the poet is the best benefactor of society. The soldier fights for his native land, but the poet touches that land with the charm that makes it worth fighting for and fires the warrior's heart with energy invincible. The statesman enlarges and orders liberty in the state, but the poet fosters the care of liberty in the heart of the citizen. The inventor multiplies the facilities of life, but the poet makes life better worth living." There

seems little room for wonder that a pious old man should pray God to bless His servant the poet for the blessings and benefits he had bestowed upon men.

It seems scarcely necessary to urge the reading of fiction. The man who can tell a good story is always sure of hearers. But perhaps it is necessary to urge people to read such books as bear more directly upon conduct and character. And in this department the Bible stands above all others. It deals, as no other book deals, with the deepest and richest things in man's heart and life. Ruskin and Carlyle both tell us that from it they have gotten more culture and refinement than from "all other books plus all the influences of colleges and universities." In that book through seer and apostle God has told us many things concerning man's nature and destiny. It sets forth the richest, and sweetest, and deepest things in human life and hopes. "Read all other books, philosophy, poetry, history, fiction, but if you would refine the judgment, fertilize the reason, wing the imagination, attain unto the finest womanhood, or the sturdiest manhood, read this book, reverently and prayerfully, until its truths have dissolved like iron into the blood. Read, indeed, the hundred great books. If you have no time, make time and read. Read as toil the slaves in Golconda, casting away the rubbish and keeping the gems. Read to transmute facts into life, but read daily the book of conduct and character—the Bible.

POETRY vs. CIVILIZATION

By Mr. Rothwell

In one of Macaulay's essays, he digresses from his subject to discuss the gradual decline of poetic virility in the race, and to advance a theory that might account for it. Briefly stated, his argument is that to really enjoy poetry of any kind, excepting that of a didactic nature, one must be gifted with a certain unsoundness of mind, a power to obliterate fact, and a strong imagination to conjure up vividly the personages and scenes described. As colors are more lurid if thrown upon a dark background, so are impressions more powerful and lasting, if received by an un-

cultivated mind. And by means of this argument he accounts for the fact, that in a highly civilized state of society, there will be plenty of good critics, abundance of analysis and elaboration of poetic technique, but a dearth of true poetry. In short, his purpose was to show, that in proportion as a people becomes practical, and begins to drift towards utilitarian ideas, it begins to lose both its power of producing and enjoying true poetry. And the more one reflects over the theory of the great essayist, the more he is inclined to accept it.