

indulging in even the lighter masterpieces of literature, and Jonathan Edwards himself read "Clarissa Harlowe" and became a better preacher for doing so.

What is true of the leaders of religious thought should be true of us all. "It has been my fortune," says Dr. Stalker, "to be acquainted with a good many celebrated preachers, and I have observed that almost without exception they have had a thorough acquaintance with the whole range of the higher English literature."\* The biographer of Robert Browning somewhat grudgingly acknowledges that chiefly for their culture "no intercourse was more congenial to the poet than that of the higher class of English clergyman."†

For three reasons I urge that the minister cultivate literature. In such a pursuit he will find *pleasure*, and he will gain *profit*, and he will acquire *power*. Pleasure and profit and power are certainly things which we have a right to get hold of as personal property.

1. First, then, consider the pleasure, the honest, simple, innocent *pleasure* which literary studies will give. Somewhere I remember John Bright's quoting with approval the remark of an old friend of his that it had pleased God to give him a great love for reading. "A man," writes Isaac Taylor, "sits surrounded with the books of all ages; among these he has passed the best years of his life. He has gone in and out among them. They are so many candles lit, shedding their beams over the expanse of centuries up to the remotest eras."‡ From them, we may add, the reader becomes luminous himself, and deserves Emerson's encomium:

"Thou art enlarged by thine own shining."

George Gilfillan said truly that he often got a better idea of the people he was visiting from the books he saw on their tables or shelves than from his conversation with them. A volume of Tennyson or of Ruskin with marks of careful and constant reading is often an eloquent witness to its owner's choice of friends. A humble parsonage and a hard struggle to make the two ends meet may be softened and almost beautified by a half dozen English classics. Poverty is for the time forgotten in their company, and he who has them in his home is better off than the Czar of all the Russias with his barbaric gold and gems. "He despises me," cried honest Ben Jonson, of an oponent, "because I live in an alley. Tell him his soul lives in an alley." It was in a very humble cottage and amid circumstances dispiriting and almost sordid that Nathaniel Hawthorne nourished a literary quality the most delicate, the most fascinating, the most genuine that America has as yet produced. Do you come home tired and chafed with the petty trials of a pastor's life? Take down some old familiar friend who does not need to be coaxed or comforted, who will not demand that you listen patiently to a long enumeration of ills, half of which are imaginary, and all of them unworthy of discourse; and as you

\* Yale Lectures, 115.

† Orris, "Browning."

‡ "Restoration of Belief," 19.