

READING OF POOR LITERATURE

To Be Avoided—Mention of Some Standard Good Novels.

(Mildred McNeal, in the Evening Wisconsin.)

In this age of almost fabulous progress, when there is so much of actual and vital fact to be studied by one who would keep abreast of the times, does it pay for a young man or woman of limited leisure to read novels? Has fiction anything to offer for the development of the manly or womanly character—anything in the way of culture or spirit training, that fact cannot give? Can it do more than charm and interest?

From my own experience I should say emphatically "yes." Science, history, travel, may develop one's brain, but the whole soul is refined and enlarged by reading lofty and ideal fiction, for it is a possible history that will be repeated and materialized in each life which it deeply impresses. We should esteem it a high honor to have been chosen the personal friend of Mrs. Stowe, Charles Dickens, Lew Wallace or Oliver Wendell Holmes. But how much greater is the honor of associating intimately with characters whom they have created. The ideals of ideal people are worth knowing.

There are some books that breathe harmony, completeness and perfection, awakening in us rare possibilities of achievement undreamed of before. All high class fiction is ideal truth, and presented in this form the influence of truth is measureless.

There are half a dozen books that I love very dearly. The exalted pleasure they have given me is almost holy sometimes, so great a part have they taken in my character education. First on the list is "Ben Hur." It is the best instance of what may be called holiness in a novel. There is a grand spirit of patience living in the book. Ben Hur, in all the beauty of his manly boyhood, leans against the tiled parapet of his Eastern palace to watch the Roman procession pass. His hand displaces a tile, and upon the falling of that fragment of brick turns all the rest of his life. He loses his palace, his freedom, his dearest ones—but not his great soul. The manly boyhood grows into a fine manly manhood. His losses are his means of growth; but after very many days his mother and sister are restored to him cleansed from their cruel punishment by the hand of the Christ, and then he is permitted to grow through love. The story is fiction, but still it holds the spirit of truth. I never can look upon it as a novel, for it is always associated to me with the One Book. I reverence it next to the Bible.

"Les Misérables" in some of its chapters is a strong contrast to "Ben Hur." It deals with sin, with the blackest Parisian life, with things we do not care to read of. But in all this blackness two incidents shine forth with startling distinctness, and nothing has ever been written more thoroughly dramatic, more wonderfully illustrative of the ascendancy of good over evil. The first scene shows two characters as opposed to one another as midnight to noonday. The fugitive convict's soul is sunk in baseness. He robs his benefactor and as he turns to flee into the night would even take the life of the old man if it would make his own safety more sure. The saintly bishop lives at such heights of trust that even with unguarded doors and a convict guest he is not disturbed of his perfect rest. In the morning, when the two are brought face to face, his nobility and god-like purity of mind shine out in one crowning act. A word from him would send Jean Valjean to the gallows again, but it is not spoken. He simply says that the silver candlesticks, the one luxury he has ever allowed himself, belongs to the convict and the convict goes free. The other scene is that of a dark bridge over the Seine where Police Inspector Javert has lately stood, and where in the river below are now a few faint widening circles. For years he has been on the track of Jean Valjean, once so close to him that he owed him his life, and yet when his fingers closed upon his prey his duty to the state and his duty to this lofty soul so conflicted that even to this man of one idea there was but a single escape. Jean Valjean has changed, and the intervening years have worked the change of a brute to a man—the man who loved so tenderly the child Cosette—and we think of the bishop and the convict as one.

There are two women in books whom I love with a devotion as real as any that I have given to any of my living girl friends. They are Ramona and the womanly little heroine of "Bleak House." I think the former is the most beautiful love story I have ever read. Is it the freedom from our conventional love that makes the unswerving love of this dusky pair so beautiful and so appealing? A feeling that is quite unworshipful possesses us as we read of her trustful happiness and her brave disappointment; and the undaunted love that neither wander nor persecution could take from him. From the happy valleys and husband and children to the desolate mountain top and death—all the long way we follow her, and close the book with an awakened soul and a more tender heart than before we knew Ramona. "Bleak House" is not a tragedy, but its dear womanly

Esther is very eloquent in her unpretending life for others, and I am sure many a woman's work bears traces of her quiet influence.

And then there is John Halifax, embodiment of all upright, lovable manliness, poor, but still a gentleman. How strong he was, and yet how tender! His wooing is almost as lovely as Alessandro's, with a more happy ending. Happiness! How delightful it is to look in upon her as we often look, in passing at night upon some happy interior, while the curtains are still undrawn—we, whose happiness is perhaps in the future or in the past, because we are far away from those we hold the dearest. It quickens the pulse of our own affections, and when next our circle is unbroken, the old ties are held with more tender reverence than before and our whole nature insensibly grows richer.

But there is one more book that holds a place in this circle of friends, not for its beauty, but for its wonderfully impressive way of getting at the truth. To those who have read this vivid word picture, scarcely a comment is necessary. A dozen treatises on the laws of habit would have failed to teach me what I have learned from this simple written sketch of the man who was at will almost a saint, and again a very pronounced sinner—of the draft of evil prepared by his own hand which gained new power over him with each succeeding taste until the form of Dr. Jekyll, the honored citizen, is lost in the repulsive frame of the outcast Hyde. It is only fiction, but it crystallizes truth in a new form; we read it where a sermon might pass unnoticed and remember it when axioms are forgotten.

It is our friends who are our greatest teachers, not the retired savant, and we cannot afford to separate ourselves from all our dear, every-day acquaintances. They may not be learned in the sciences, but there are very few from whom we cannot learn more of the science of true living and true growth. And so it is with our reading, which is only another form of social intercourse. Without a knowledge of the higher fiction our development will be one-sided; to see how other lives have been lived, then follow the examples and avoid the false steps, that some mind higher than our own has thought out for us, are among the most precious of all our privileges.

"If God creates a sun He stoops to do it. If He creates a man He stoops to do it, as the potter stoops to his wet clay. God cannot rise."—[Dr. Parker.]

Recollections of the Crimea.

"Did you see the Balaklava charge?" I asked my old friend, General—, who was colonel of one of the four Highland regiments at Balaklava. "Oh, yes," he answered; "I was standing on the top of a rough slope, about as high as the hotel over the way, when all at once, Nolan came flashing past from behind. It was too broken a descent for an ordinary rider, but he feared nothing when on horseback, and swept down, crying out to me as he passed, 'Look out, and you'll see something.' At the bottom of the hill a low ridge struck out at right angles, and on the one side of this were the heavy cavalry; on the other, the light; hidden from each other. Nolan rushed towards the side where the light cavalry were, to Lord Lucan. In a minute or two more I saw what was in the wind. Away up the valley, which was quite open before me, the 600 galloped at their swiftest towards the Russian army, which closed the view, about a mile off, with horse, foot and artillery. Presently artillery and musketry opened fiercely on the redcoats riding so swiftly to death. In ten minutes from their starting all was over, and the few who escaped were coming back by ones and twos to the position they had left. One young officer, on a strong chestnut horse, rode up the hill to where I was, and, leaping off, broke out with the story of his escape: 'I was nearly done for,' said he, 'Look, my epaulettes have been sliced off; my horse was shot, and the Russians were on me, but this horse came running past, and I caught his bridle and leaped on his back, and he saved my life. Let us look at his hoofs and see to what regiment he belonged.'"

My friend and he did so, and I was told, but I forget the letters they found burned into the front of the hoof. The young officer so strangely saved was Sir George Wombwell, then a stripling not much over twenty.

"It was strange," said my friend, at another time, "how reckless some men were. There was one, Aleck Macgregor, a fine fellow, who gave me no end of trouble by his foolhardiness. Nothing would make him keep down in the trench. 'Just let me have one shot more at the Russians,' he would say, getting up on the edge of the ditch. And there he would sit in full sight of the enemy, who were quite near, and kept firing at him as a grim joke, to pot such a mocker of their skill. But he never got hurt, nor could I break him of his wild folly. It was no use to threaten, for he was an excellent soldier, and we could not spare a man, so all I might thunder at him had to remain mere words. Strange to say he met his death on the pavement at the Tron Church in Edinburgh. Seeing a man ill-using his wife, Aleck ventured to remonstrate, but the brute hit him on the forehead with his whole force, and Aleck fell back with such a blow as fractured his skull."—[The New Age.]

It Has Ticked for 140 Years

A Watch that Has Run Since 1754 and Is Still a Good Timepiece.

(From the Cincinnati Enquirer.)

Judge Frederick W. Moore of the Superior Court is the possessor of an heirloom in the shape of a watch that no amount of money would buy. And, besides its value as a heirloom, it has a historic interest.

The timepiece is of the open-face, bull's-eye pattern. As with all old-style watches of the pattern mentioned, the outer case must be removed before it can be wound. The outer case of this watch is of hammered gold, and all the work on it was done by hand. While this is apparent from the workmanship, it is further proved by the date on the inside, which is 1754. There is an inscription on the inside as follows: "Daniel De St. Leu, Servant to Her Majesty, London." Her Majesty then was the Queen of George II., the then reigning King of England.

The authentic history of this valuable timepiece is this: In the years preceding 1754 William Augusta, Duke of Chamberland, the second son of George II., was the commander of the British armies. In the Scottish campaign, and in the campaigns against the Prussians and the Russians, and when he was at the head of the British, Hanoverian, and Danish forces of 50,000 men. Dr. Frederick William Schwartz, a Hanoverian, was on the staff as surgeon. At the close of the campaign against the Prussians and the Russians the Duke had three watches made like the one Judge Moore has, and of which it is one. The watches were presented to three officers of the Duke's staff by him as a mark of his esteem. One went to Dr. Schwartz, as a Hanoverian; one to a British officer, and one to a Danish officer. The presentations were made in 1755. After the Doctor's services had ended, in 1755, and the Duke had returned to London, it was expected he would succeed to the throne, but the birth of a son to his elder brother cut him out.

In 1870 Dr. Schwartz and the Mohr families came to this country, and there were intermarriages in the families, and in this way Judge Moore is related to, or rather descended from, Dr. Schwartz. About 1800 the families came to this State, the Schwartzes going to Germantown and the Mohrs coming to this city. The watch in question has always been worn by members of the Schwartz family, usually by the son, who bore the name of Frederick William, the name of the original owner. The last one of that name who wore it was Frederick William Schwartz of Green Township, this county, who died three or four years ago. He was the last of the Schwartz family to be named Frederick William. But the name had been perpetuated in Judge Moore, as that is his name. He was rightfully entitled to the watch, and it was presented to him a short time ago by the widow of the last man who wore it. To say that the judge is proud of the treasure is to express it but mildly. Not only is it a treasure as an heirloom and a curiosity, but he could not have a better piece of evidence of the kind of people from whom he is descended.

There is an interesting history connected with another of the three watches mentioned. The one presented to the British officer was worn by a member of his family in this country during the colonial wars with the Indians. The man who wore it was captured, and the watch was taken from him and worn by Brant, the Indian chief. Afterward when Brant was captured by the Americans the watch was recovered and was returned to the family of the British officer in England. What became of the third watch, the one presented to the Danish officer, the descendants of Dr. Schwartz do not know.

Though the watch now possessed by Judge Moore is 140 years old, it keeps good time. It is full jeweled, and seems to be in an almost perfect state of preservation.

The Tennyson Beacon.

Alfred Tennyson during the last half of his life lived on the Isle of Wight, in the British Channel. There it was that his American friends chiefly saw him, and it was a sort of Mecca for all admirers of the poet. Those who came properly introduced were courteously received and entertained, but Tennyson was impatient under the gaze of strangers and gave but reluctant welcome to prying visitors. Many American admirers of the poet have possibly suffered at his hands in this way, but it is not a thing to be treasured. He was the great poet of the nineteenth century, the spokesman of his time. He is possibly the last of the laureates, and worthily might be, for no successor seems to have arisen on the horizon as yet. There should, therefore, be some unique monument raised to his memory, and such has been proposed.

Shortly after his death it was decided by a committee appointed to erect a memorial to the poet that a granite monument should be raised on the Isle of Wight on the highest crest commanding the western end of the island. This was the poet's favorite walk, a spot he dearly loved, where he could overlook the sea, and where he held communion with his muse. It is to be called the Tennyson Beacon, and is to

be a land and sea mark in view of every ship that passes the island.

The memorial will cost \$6,000. Four thousand dollars has been subscribed in England and about \$1,000 in the United States. Among the American subscribers are the late Oliver Wendell Holmes, Miss Alice Longfellow, Mrs. Julia Ward Howe, Miss Sarah Orne Jewell, Thomas Bailey Aldrich, Mrs. Deland, Mrs. Celia Thaxter, Professor Norton and a number of other distinguished Americans. If the Chicago admirers of Tennyson have responded that fact has not been made known, but if there are any who desire to have a part in this memorial an opportunity is afforded. The New York Critic offers to receive contributions for this purpose and will forward them to the committee in London. Small sums are asked, that as many as possible may testify their regard for the exquisite poetry and blameless life of England's latest laureate.—[Chicago Times-Herald.]

The Decrease of Poverty

In Great Britain—A Hopeful Report by a Government Commission.

(From Harper's Weekly.)

A very hopeful report has been made by the British "Commission on the Aged Poor." Its conclusions are worth noting in this country, because there are persons here as well as on the other side of the water who take a gloomy view of humanity, and who believe that pauperism and distress are increasing. Political parties are founded on this pessimistic sentiment, and assaults are made upon the thrifty for the benefit of the debtors and the poor, as if the great majority of American and British citizens were helpless and indigent and in the power of grasping creditors.

To the honest pessimists, as well as to those who take a more wholesome view of life, the report of the "Royal Commission on the Aged Poor" will bring much happiness. The commissioners found that the number of the aged poor is decreasing in the United Kingdom. They were dealing with paupers over sixty-five years of age, and it was found that three in ten of the total population of Great Britain are compelled to apply for parish relief. This may seem a large number to Americans, but it shows an actual decrease of pauperism in Great Britain.

The commissioners do not agree on all points. Mr. Chamberlain urged the adoption of an insurance system. Mr. Charles Booth recommended a weekly pension of five shillings. Other commissioners, Mr. Broadhurst and Mr. Joseph Arch, recommended radical and socialistic changes. There was a most unusual divergence of views when changes in the existing poor laws came to be considered, but there was also a certain evidence of weakening convictions among those who had formerly been most strenuous for state aid. And this weakness was no doubt due to the discovery made, both by the signers of the majority and of the minority reports, that old-age paupers are decreasing in numbers.

The reason given for this decrease is no less interesting than the change itself. In the minority report, which was signed by Mr. Chamberlain, and which expressed some very mild regret at the failure of the commission to recommend some scheme of state insurance, it was stated that the diminution of pauperism is due only in part to a stricter administration of the laws, and "chiefly to the increased prosperity of the working-classes generally."

There are volumes of encouragement in this report to those who are trying to defeat the schemes of socialism and communism that are appearing in the legislative bodies of Great Britain and the United States, as well as in those of the less favored countries of the continent of Europe. The increase of the prosperity of wage-earners has been general. The working-man is earning more and living better than at any former time in the history of wages and prices. Pauperism is among the evils that are being gradually overcome. It will exist for a long time to come, but more and more it is growing to be the result of misconduct, and not of social and economic conditions. No doubt its disappearance may be expedited by wise legislation, but it will be increased by such legislation as the socialist demagogue proposes.

What we need in this direction is an individual freedom larger even than that which we now enjoy—a larger opportunity for the best men to gain all the advantages possible from the free employment of their abilities, to the end, among other things, that they may increase opportunities for others and especially for men of humbler powers. The collectivist exhorter is the worst enemy of the working man—the enemy who urges him to put a block in the way of his own progress.

What Is a Lady?

Many definitions are being given in these days of the word lady; we therefore asked our readers to give those that appeal to them, and with the following result: Miss Willard said: "A lady is one who not only purposes to make every living creature with whom she comes in contact happier, but knows how to do it." Lady Henry Somerset said: "A lady is one who never makes any one else feel inferior to herself either mentally, morally or socially." It might be well in this connection to mention Cardinal New-

man's definition of a gentleman: "He is one who is incapable of giving willful pain."

Some Popular Airs.

Woman Musicians Have Composed Several.

It is not generally known that women have composed a majority of the well known sentimental songs loved by men and women. Lady Jane Scott gave to the world "Annie Laurie." The old Baroness still lives in England, and is well known for her devotion to the Crimean heroes. "Lady Arthur Hill is author of 'In the Gloaming,' and the Hon. Mrs. Elizabeth Morton wrote that languorous melody, "Junia." Lady Scott Gattie composed "Douglas, Tender and True," and "Maryland, My Maryland," owed the thrill of its spirited tune to a woman.

Mrs. Fitzgerald made the melody of "I Remember, I Remember," and the musical pathos of "Auld Robin Grey" originated in the brain of Lady Ann Lindsay. "We'd Better Bide A'wee" was the work of a woman.

Lady Nairne, a charming Scotchwoman, has contributed two songs that need only to be sung in any clime to cause every wearer of the tratan to throw his plaid cap to the breeze. These are the "Campbells Are Coming" and the "Land o' the Leal." She also wrote the well-known "Laird o' Cock Pen," which, with that other famous old tune, "Ben Bolt," has been revived to memory by "Tribby." Joanna Baillie is another woman from the land of the heather who wrote a good old Scotch ballad, "Woo'd and Married and A'." "What Ails this Heart of Mine" is the work of Miss Blamire, and it was a woman who wrote the words to "Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep."

Mlle. Chaminade, a French woman, is one of the most popular song writers of to-day. For six or seven years she has been before the public by reason of the melody of her scores, which are sung by the leading concert lights. In a less sentimental vein there have been numerous women composers. Fanny Hensel of the Mendelssohn-Barthold family, did some excellent work in Hamburg in the '40's; Augusta Holmes has written favorably-known symphonies and some exquisite songs, one of which M. Plancon of the Metropolitan Opera troupe, sang to perfection last season. Helen Hopekirk, a Scotchwoman, wrote for the piano Maria Marias wrote "Alcide" and "Ariane at Bacchus," said Marchesi, the famed Paris teacher, put her name to the "Ecole de Chant." Mme. Oury, nee Caroline de Belleville, has written 180 successful pieces of drawing-room music.

Women in the World.

According to the most reliable estimates the world to-day contains 280,000,000 grown women. Among civilized nations the United States have actually the largest share, their feminine population being 30,554,370. Russia comes next with an adult feminine population of 23,200,000. Then a long way after come the German Empire with 10,930,000; Austria with 9,680,000; Great Britain with 8,766,000; France with 8,586,000, and Italy with 6,850,000. Spain comes next on the list with 4,130,000 of the fair sex, and she is followed by Belgium with 1,340,000; Roumania with 1,260,000; Sweden with 1,170,000; Portugal with 1,080,000, and Holland with 1,070,000. The countries whose adult feminine population does not reach 1,000,000 are Switzerland, which has only 690,000; Norway, which has 465,000, and Greece and Denmark, which are tied at 460,000.

In this estimate it will be noted that the entire female population of the United States is given, and only the number of grown women in the different countries of Europe. As a matter of fact, in proportion to its population this country has fewer women than most of the others mentioned.

The proportion of women to men in the United States is greatest in New England, where the women are in excess. It is least in the far west, where the number of men exceeds that of the women. Wyoming has the smallest female population, 21,362; New York the largest, 3,020,960; while it is said that one factory in New England employs 12,000 women.—[Buffalo Commercial.]

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