

the day might give a clue to their journey to those who have yet a morning and a noon. As I look back and think of those cataracts of printed stuff which honest compositors set up, meaning, let us trust, no harm, and which at least found them in daily bread—printed stuff which I and the rest of us, to our infinitely small profit, have consumed with our eyes, not even making an honest living of it, but much impairing our substance—I could almost reckon the printing press as amongst the scourges of mankind. I am grown a wiser and a sadder man, importunate, like that ancient mariner, to tell each blithe wedding guest the tale of his shipwreck on the infinite sea of printer's ink, as one escaped by mercy and grace from the region where there is 'water, water everywhere and not a drop to drink.'"

And Mr. Carlyle, who has spoken many true and beautiful words of books, gives the same warning with his wonted point and power in his rectorial address at Edinburgh:—"I do not know," he says, "whether it has been sufficiently brought home to you that there are two kinds of books. When a man is reading on any kind of subject, in most departments of books—in all books, if you take it in a wide sense—he will find that there is a division into good books and bad books. Everywhere a good kind of book and a bad kind of book. I am not to assume that you are unacquainted, or ill acquainted, with this plain fact; but I may remind you that it is becoming a very important consideration in our day. And we have to cast aside altogether the idea people have that if they are reading any book, and if an ignorant man is reading any book, he is doing rather better than nothing at all. There is a number, a frightfully increasing number, of books that are decidedly, to the readers of them, not useful.

But an ingenuous reader will learn, also, that a certain number of books were written by a supremely noble kind of people—not a very great number of books, but still a number fit to occupy all your reading industry. Do adhere more or less to that side of things. In short, as I have written it down somewhere else, I conceive that books are like men's souls—divided into sheep and goats. Some few are going up, carrying us up, heavenward; calculated, I mean, to be of priceless advantage in teaching—in forwarding the teaching of all generations. Others, a frightful multitude, are going down, down; doing ever the more and the wider and the wilder mischief. Keep a strict eye on that latter class of books, my young friends."

Perhaps one might venture to enforce this caution with a little more of particularity, and say, somewhat more distinctly, what classes of books should be avoided.

(1) In the first place, and beyond all doubt and debate, avoid all obscene and defiling books; and this advice applies especially to the young. I cannot conceive of any good to be got from such books. Even granting that they may not be all bad, yet the good which is in them you may get elsewhere without the evil. I forbear to name books or authors or classes of books, because I do not want to suggest the poisoned fountains. But I think it would be well that younger people should not read works of fiction without having the assurance of their elders that they may safely do so. I am aware that such advice is in violent opposition to the spirit of the age; but it is the business of men of my calling not to say what the spirit of the age expects, but what the voice of truth demands. I say no more on this point. Those who are willing to be warned will take the warning.