

Louis Stevenson's later elucubrations,—"The Wrong Box" for instance? Let any brain-wearied, wrung-out poor mortal have but an hour's reprieve every day from rigid duty and let him take up, better still, take *out* with him, some one of these recent books, and let him tell the honest truth about their powers of amusing and entertaining. I am sure the result will be a renewed energy for work, for of course work is the inevitable and desirable sentence upon us all. Let us have no more "Gradgrinds" with their heartless theory of "solid tangible facts," with never a loop-hole anywhere to peep in at some of the shows or to peep out of our dull sad selves.

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Amusing reading is indeed healthy reading, taken of course at the right time and in judicious quantities, and what a blessing that we are not so fearfully identified with our machinery and scientific apparatus as to have lost all capacity of enjoying a good ringing laugh over some bit of fancy like the ludicrous effects of "Dick Bulvitute's" Garudâ stone, for instance (see "Vice Versa") or Daudet's "Tartarin."

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The old books, doubtless, are the best; Thomas à Kempis thought so in his day. I daresay no man, barring Adam, but has had a tendency to turn to the past for wisdom. It is quite certain that while Shakspeare was striking off his immortal plays, the *proper* people of his time were interested only in the poetry of the preceding age. So it has been, and though we have seen all kinds of revolutions, so it will always be. I suppose it is with books as with men:—"The survival of the fittest" is the inexorable law. People did not begin to read Shakspeare's works till they were a hundred years old; not till they were two hundred years old did they begin to quote them. Now they are an essential of education, and so on of all the "Immortals."

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I have often wondered (I was not brought up on the Gradgrind principle that we "should never wonder") as to what works of the present age will hold their own against the grim old demolisher, Time! what degree of respectful attention

will the men and women of the thirtieth century bestow upon Browning, Tennyson, Longfellow, Bryant, Carlyle, Emerson and Matthew Arnold? Will the people of ten centuries hence, go to these men as to teachers? as we go, for instance, to Dante, to Cervantes and to two or three others? (I'm not considering the purely spiritual aspect of the question, merely the literary, or if a general term be better, the artistic). Some of us have already settled the case of some of the above-mentioned, no need to wait ten centuries to decide upon the qualifications of Carlyle, for instance as a teacher—a teacher supposes a guide, and a guide who leadsto *known* issues. Now, most of these men, if we consider them otherwise than as poets, give us to suspect that they are not quite sure of the "Beyond." Agnostics, avowed or unavowed, can scarcely be called teachers; they have taught us some things, intermediate things let us call them—after all, we don't need these self appointed guides to reach the goal. The Truth and the Way and the Life are known to us beyond the power of any man to make clearer.

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Coming back to the question of survival it is a remarkable fact that in nearly every generation, those writers who were held in highest repute by their contemporaries are the ones whose works have soonest reached oblivion. What would have become of Dr. Johnson "the grand Cham" of literature and morals, in his day, had not his irrepressible adorer given us a book about the great "Struggler" that makes of the author of "Rasselas," a powerful figure for all time?

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There is more or less humbug about reading the classics of the eighteenth century if we would only own up to it, and as far as my humble self is concerned I'm right glad that some of the snubbed and much ignored writers of the first quarter of the nineteenth century are growing in popular favor, is it not but fair play that the harmless and often beautifully inspired "Eliä" should be quite the fashion of late? Indeed, may we not count this enthusiastic recognition of Charles Lamb, one of the healthy signs of our