

ECHOES FROM THE CLASS-ROOM.

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V.—READING.

READING is, of all educational means, the one best adapted to fill the inquiring mind with varied information, lively images, and the choicest thought of all climes and civilizations. Books are the monuments of times, wherein are inscribed the epitaphs of the ages, eternalizing men and things. Printing is the child of Legend but the parent of Knowledge. Born and developed out of man's intellectual need, it has from the same cause become the progenitor of a greater intellectuality. It has crystallized what was before amorphous or scattered. It has rendered stable and everlasting what was before vague, evanescent and unreliable.

"Reading," says Bacon, "maketh a full man;" true, and it has this advantage over many educational topics in the school curriculum; once mastered, it is mastered for life. No further difficulties can fairly present themselves. The instrument once perfected is eternal in its office. It is independent of amendments, additions, elisions, contradictions, or verifications.

As time advances and men's eyes peer more closely into the future, modifications in various branches of learning are rendered necessary. Much, indeed, that was learned has to be unlearned, preparatory to being relearned. To-day, a supposed law of physics is discovered to be inapplicable or altogether misleading. To-morrow, what was thought to be flat and motionless is found to be spherical and rotating. The next day, chemical nomenclature is revolutionized. Yet a space, and a theological

tenet, which for centuries formed one of the paving-stones of orthodoxy, in the light of modern inquiry, falls through, to leave a hideous void, where before men humbly knelt and kissed the fallacy. But with reading nothing has to be unlearned. The power once acquired abides with us, so that if language itself changes, the changes may be traced, classified and interpreted through the agency of a present constant medium. Thus, though speech, both written and spoken, shows some mutation through the course of centuries, to the present generation in time, it never changes, it is always *ours*. Let us trust that it may ever be so. Let us pause and consider before we attempt any sweeping change in our glorious heritage of letters which contains so much of history. Let us recollect that ease comes not with innovations, that no royal road to learning can ever be made useful or even practicable. Changes that are truly necessary come with time and of themselves.

Time, the corrector where our judgments err;
The test of love, truth, sole philosopher.

Sweeping changes in language, like all revolutions, do more harm than good; they leave the constitution unsettled, the elements conflicting, the treasury not unfrequently bankrupt. The hermit crab, finding its habitation too circumscribed for normal growth, shuffles out of the alien shell to seek another asylum; but, during its search, naked, defenceless and bewildered, it too often falls an easy prey to its voracious foes. Let us take a lesson from the crab, *Festina lente!*

I do not hesitate to say that good