

The Home

A One-Sided Bargain

Few women, when they read in their daily papers that the Board of Aldermen has given or sold a franchise to a railroad corporation, understand just what it means, or how they can be affected. It means that a private corporation has been given the right of way through certain streets. This right of way includes absolute control of the streets to lay tracks, make repairs, etc. The company can block streets with materials until it is ready to use them, and the public must endure.

Recently a corporation that owns almost every line of surface cars in a certain city decided to improve its road-bed through the principal street of that city. First, carts appeared, and a layer of dirt was spread from the curb to the up track. Next, temporary flat rails were laid on this, which stretched almost eight blocks. An extra trolley-wire was strung overhead. Then the stones were removed from between the tracks, and new ties and rails put down. It was not possible to cross the street except at corners, and here spring-boards were loosely laid, and two men stood ready, not to help people across this mire, but to pull and push them out of the way of the cars, lest there should be a "block." In front of the large dry-goods stores two men stood. The moment the car stopped, the descending passenger was grabbed by shoulder or arm, and shunted to the sidewalk like a bale of goods. A carriage could not approach the sidewalk, and all carting and trucking had to be done between the down track and the opposite curb. The result was fights, profanity, recklessness on the part of drivers, and general discomfort. Nor does this sum it up. The paving-stones between the tracks, when laid, were covered for three inches with dirt, which must be blown into the eyes and clothing of the people for the next month. This is what a railroad franchise means in a city.

Railroads are a necessity to public comfort, but too often they are also a source of public discomfort. Cars are run at the intervals that mean the largest profit at the least expense to the corporation, not as suits the convenience of the public. They are not kept clean; they are poorly lighted—that is, the majority of the cars. They are overcrowded, and positive indignities must be borne because of this overcrowding. The employees are not in uniform except on a few lines; nor are they compelled to observe a certain standard of cleanliness and neatness. Certain standards of manners should be observed, but are not. As some one has wittily said, "You cannot expect the manners of a Chesterfield at two dollars a day," but neither does one expect studied discourtesy at two dollars a day. We must demand a commensurate return for value received. If we give the right to earn profits, we should demand that these be honestly earned by the giving of a service that tends to promote public convenience, health, and comfort.



The Passing of Wisdom

The audience was gathering slowly for the lecture. There came in a woman with gray hair, whose clean, clear-cut features gave evidence of an intellect above the average. She sat down in the front row of seats, but changed to the second row, leaving her umbrella to secure the seat. After the change she turned to her neighbor, saying, "I want to keep that seat, for I want to hear every word. I changed so that I might rest my feet. I am so

tired. Everybody is tired," she continued, after a pause, adjusting her feet comfortably on the rung of the chair in front.

"Well, why should we all be tired? We choose to be. We have no sense of proportion, or, if we have it, we do not use it," was the comment of the neighbor.

"Everybody in New York is tired," went on the Intellectual One; "that's why we live in New York—for the privilege of dying young."

"The favor of the gods, then, depends on locality," commented the neighbor.

"Yes. We all want to know so much," she continued, dreamily. "I am protected. I cannot know all I would, for nature has set her limit. Just as soon as I have heard all I can use, a sweet, merciful stupidity comes over me, and I am saved—I am saved!"

Just then the umbrella fell, and the Intellectual One sprang to secure her seat, and left her neighbor thinking how few of us recognize the beneficent office of stupidity when well used.



Reading: An Open Letter

By Lucy Elliot Keeler

You ask for suggestions upon reading, and your request reminds me of the young lady who, having a half-hour of leisure, begged Voltaire to tell her the history of the world!

You inquire if I have read "Marcella" and "Katherine Lauderdale," "Trilby" and "Ships that Pass in the Night," and in the same breath in which you laud the multitude of good novels you complain that you cannot cope with the piles of current literature, much less make up the old. Truly, books are in the saddle and ride the world, and you want to know what to do about it.

First, then, let me beg you to adopt some principle of selection.

Amassing flowers,
Youth sighed, "Which rose make ours?
Which lily leave?"

But be sure that, whatever you choose, some one will consider that particular choice a foolish waste of time. If it lie in the line of your life-work, so much the better; but anything which attracts your attention will serve, be it, as Sir Herbert Maxwell says, "the precession of the equinoxes or postage-stamps, the Athenian drama or London street-cries: follow it from book to book, and unconsciously your knowledge, not of that subject only, but of many subjects, will be increased, for the departments of knowledge are divided by no octroi."

Having chosen a subject, much of the art of reading lies in judicious skipping. "You may know the flavor of a cheese," declares Oliver Wendell Holmes, "without eating it entire." The art is to pass over all that does not concern us while missing nothing that does. In every volume, in every magazine, in every newspaper even, there is a little bit that we ought to read, and much, very much, that is better disregarded. In this we must be as independent of custom as in the selection of our subject.

We lose vigor through thinking continually the same set of thoughts, and the person who has leisure to read uninterruptedly may well have several books on hand at the same time with which to vary though not encroach upon his chosen field. In this way a historical student may obtain a fair idea of science and belles-lettres. Imaginative literature should have a place in every course of reading. Fox said that "men first found out that they had minds by making and tasting poetry;" Lowell, that "poetry frequents and keeps habitable the upper chambers of the mind, which open toward the sun's rising;" and Frederic Harrison puts the "emotional side of literature as the one most needed for daily life."

Certain outlines of history and biography should become familiar; and in these days of theological and sociological novels, that department is almost barred the term "light reading." May I here, my dear young lady, offer a protest against many of the so-called "strong" novels of the day—sordid, pessimistic, without a ray of light to "gild

the unguarded moments we steal from time?" For my part, I prefer to learn, if learn from novels I must, from contemplation of what is brave and fair and of good report, rather than from hatred of what is mean and low and foul. "An underbred book," says Charles Dudley Warner, "is worse than any possible epidemic."

As to magazines, too many of our best works there see their first light for us to disregard them; and newspapers must have our regular but summary attention. Mr. Hamerton declares that the reason the French peasants are so bewildered and out of place in the modern world is because they never read a newspaper. By means of head-lines and editorials, however, we may quickly wrest the essentials and discard the remainder.

After the what comes the how. To get from a book the best it can give, you must be properly presented to it. The name of the author is as important as the name of your hostess at a reception. One of Souvestre's most charming works, "Les Derniers Bretons," owed its failure in England to being translated from a German version—the absurd result of the bad practice of not reading prefaces. Francis Lieber's advice to his son was that "whenever you get a new book you must decide whether you will read or study it through at once, or put it away as a book of reference, to read parts upon occasions. If the latter is the case, you must read the contents. If that is wanting, you must glance over the book, so that you know what subjects are treated. If you put it on the shelf without this, you might as well not possess it at all. Mark this for all your life: the question is always important, when we own a thing, 'Are we master of it?' Books, money, fields, power, knowledge, are not our own, although we may own them, if we are not master over them."

There are two ways of impressing what we read upon the memory. One is by repetition, as Watteau painted St. Nicholas in a shop until he could produce them with his eyes closed; and the other by concentration of thought upon a single reading. The first is the parrot and the school-boy method; the second, that of the time-saver and the thinker. This power of concentration is one of the most difficult things in the world, and is attained only by earnest effort. The practice of making brief notes from memory after one has read a chapter or volume is admirable discipline; and some system of marking and note-making is indispensable. Do not be tempted to leave a passage before its meaning is clear to you, content if the author "babbles pleasantly enough to keep your thoughts in a state of agreeable titillation;" and pay close attention to words. We have all laughed over the school-teacher in "Marcella" who, when unable to pronounce a word herself, dismissed it with "Say Jerusalem, my dear, and pass on!"

Ruskin complains that we are prone to say, "How good that passage is—that is exactly what I think!" whereas the right feeling should be, "How strange that is! I never thought of that before, and yet I see that it is true; or, if I do not now, I hope I shall some day." The reader who looks for advancement must read with an open mind. Whether you agree with a book or not is of little consequence. The point is, does it make you think? Does it illumine the dark places in your mind, and stir your feelings to the point of right action? "What Guizot learned this morning," a contemporary said of him, "he has the air of having known from all eternity." Above all, readers must not imagine that all the pleasure of composition depends on the author. The reader must himself bring something to the book. Everything depends on the spirit with which we approach it. The key to all secrets we must carry in ourselves.

There is no good thing, however, without its dangers, and the love of reading accedes to the general law. It is apt to be indulged in to downright gluttony, and to occupy time which should be given to other duties. "How dare I read Washington's campaigns," wrote Emerson, "when I have not answered my letters? Much of our reading is a pusillanimous desertion of our work to gaze after our neighbors."

It is not so much the badness of a novel that we should

dread as its overwrought interest. "The best romance," says Ruskin, "becomes dangerous if by its excitement it renders the ordinary course of life uninteresting, and increases the morbid thirst for acquaintance with scenes in which we shall never be called to act." Have we the courage of the German boy reading a blood-and-thunder novel? In the midst of it he said to himself: "This will never do. I get too much excited over it. I cannot study so well after it. So here it goes." And he flung the book into the river. He was Fichte, the great German philosopher.

Finally, why should we read? To be "deep-versed in books, and shallow in ourselves"? to "know for knowing's sake, the wonder it inspires"? so that we may lose ourselves in the contemplation of a description and never raise our eyes to the towering mountain and the flying cloud? Does self-burial in one's library come from the love of literature?

Indeed, no. While to use books rightly is to go to them for help; to appeal to them when our knowledge and our power of thought fail; to be led by them into purer conceptions than our own, and receive from them "the united councils of all time against our solitary and unstable opinion," it is yet more than this. Whenever we find another human voice to answer ours, and another human hand to take in our own, we should open that book. "All the books," affirms Walter Besant, "that were ever written are valuable only as they help us to read and understand the language in which they are written."

So, my dear young lady, I have drawn this bare outline around the subject you indicated. It is as different from the realization as "ten minutes by the clock differs from ten minutes of happiness," as it is different from the two points in the adventure of the diver:

One when, a beggar, he prepares to plunge;
One when, a prince, he rises with his pearl.



Some Revelations of Science

The most active handmaiden placed at the service of the intelligent housekeeper to-day is science, and her service is rendered without remuneration. Every department of housekeeping is indebted to science for her generous donation of accurate knowledge based on investigation and research. This knowledge, if used by those who manage homes, reduces the cost of living, reduces the dangers of disease and death, and reduces crime and immorality.

The loss in money to the homes of this country through the adulteration of food is enormous. The Ohio Dairy and Food Commission has placed every home in the land in its debt because of the aggressive, thorough work it is now doing to detect adulterations in all articles of food and proprietary medicines and tonics.

The first crusade was waged against grocers. Goods were bought and analyzed by authorized chemists, and the seller prosecuted when the goods sold were adulterated or below recognized standards. Vinegar sold as cider vinegar is on the market, sold regularly and bought in perfect faith, which is a chemical compound. Jellies and jams were analyzed and found to contain only a small percentage of the real fruits. Jellies were made of water, grape and cane sugar, ash, and coloring matter. Spices yielded, on analysis, cocoanut shells, rice, flour, and ashes. Coffee contained burnt starch, burnt sugar, and saccharine extracts. A preparation sold as lemonade was proved to be made of water, sugar, and tartaric acid, and contained no lemon. A dairyman was prosecuted for selling skimmed milk; the milk he sold contained ninety per cent. of water, and of the ten per cent. only 1.2 per cent. contained fats. A fine of one hundred and fifty dollars was imposed in this case, which was a test case. All the cases tried resulted in victory for the Commission. Public sentiment has been educated in the demanding of pure foods in Ohio through the effort of the Dairy and Food Commission that the arrest and prosecution of offenders is made easy, not difficult, as in most of our States. This last year