

The Editor's Page



BOOKS AND THE MIND

AN ANCIENT Greek, finding himself suddenly and mysteriously in today's modern world, where Education beckons from the market place, would expect to find every home with a large library of the world's treasures of literature. He would be mistaken. The number of homes having even a small collection are greatly outnumbered by those with no books at all. And in many cases we find that the few volumes that are in a home have been borrowed "from uncle Juan, who is queer, and reads a lot." The exclamations of awe and amazement which so many people utter when they see a modest library of even the most mediocre literature, shows the bareness of the average home when books are concerned.

Is this a significant indication of the contents of the mind of the average person? Did I not hear of a wise man saying, "Show me a man's books and you have shown me the man"? Can it not be as truly said that a man can be judged by the books that he does *not* have?

Most people are not reluctant to pay out good money for stylish, well-fitting clothes. They spend a large share of the weekly income for food without too much complaint. But they hesitate to spend even a few centavos on anything in the way of reading matter except a fifty-centavo magazine or a twenty-centavo newspaper. They fancy that the shoddiness of the mind's apparel, or the leanness of the intellect, goes unnoted because it is not discerned by the eye.

Many people are adverse to either lending or borrowing books. This attitude is one which is much to be sympathized with, for a great number of people seem unable to differentiate between a gift and a loan. Still, the practise is not to be condemned without exception. Abraham Lincoln, too poor to buy

books, gained a lot of his education from borrowed ones. But books are good friends, bought or borrowed, for we meet most of our friends through someone else, and their companionship is valued none the less for that.

Just as we wish to make lasting friendships with people, so we should wish for enduring friendships in books, for of all our friends—and many are truly constant—books are the most faithful of all. They converse with us of the subject which pleases us most at the moment. They take us on long journeys to far places. With them we can travel through the strange country of Cathay, accompanied by the adventurous Marco Polo. We may watch the mighty Caesar as he stands beside the narrow Rubicon. We can march with the fleet Alexander as he sweeps from the Isles of Greece to the ancient land of India. With a Newton or a Pasteur we may delve into the innermost secrets of Nature. Into the blazing midnight heavens we can mount with Galileo, and wander with him through the deep caverns of Orion or adown the softly gleaming Milky Way. We can look into the minds of the great men of earth and think their thoughts with them. Yes, we may even glimpse for a brief moment the indescribable grandeur of heaven, and, with averted faces and deep and solemn awe, think a thought with God.

"My mind to me a kingdom is." A wise king does not allow his kingdom to lie fallow, or his subjects to grow lazy and ignorant. And we, being kings and queens, and wishing to be wise, will cultivate our minds to its highest capacity with the finest materials available, for knowledge is an asset which no enemy conquest can destroy or take from us.

The presses of today testify voluminously to the assertion of Solomon that "of making many books there is no end," so that the problem of what we are to read increases hourly. Those books which have been recommended by people of high repute; books which have stood the test of the years, which lead us to face life with an unwavering eye and steady hand, and to understand the things of life,—these are the books which we should seek and cherish, for they are our unfailing friends and undecieving companions.

When the lashing typhoon rains keep us inside our homes, or when the luring summer breezes lead us beside a quiet river, what is better than to sit with a friend and discuss and exchange the knowledge and the companions we have met in our priceless possessions—books!

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