

print, especially if it is done on expensive white paper with a wide margin. Men who would detect and spurn a lie if spoken, will read lies by the hundred, and should they find two books which flatly contradict each other in respect to statements of facts, they wonder how it can be possible that both are worthy of credit, and yet, as they are books they must of course be true, though they cannot see how.

A book, let it be remembered, is an individual's own expression of his thoughts and by no magic can it be any better than the author makes it. The author may be a wise man or a fool, an honest man or a villain, a man of good intentions or a concealer of evil. He may be unassuming, or he may be slightly (or more than slightly) elevated in self-conceit. He may have something worth while to say, and not know how to say it. But whatever he is or knows or has the power to communicate, that will be written in his book, whether he thereby writes himself down a sage or a fool. Whatever may be the author's prejudices and peculiarities of thinking, his book will betray them.

These traces of personality are oftener to be discovered than we might imagine. A Dictionary seems to be the least possessed of any savor or aspect of human personality, but even in such a book we may discover the feelings of the writer. For example, Dr. Johnson is said to define *excise* and *pension* thus; "An excise," he says, "is a hateful tax levied on commodities, and adjudged, not by the common judges of property, but by wretches hired by those to whom the excise is paid." Pension he defines as "an allowance made to any one without an equivalent. In England it is generally understood to mean pay given to a state hireling for treason to his country."

A historian, at the first thought, may seem to be an impersonal chronicler of historical events. Yet who can read Gibbon, Hallam, Hume, and Arnold without gaining a transcript of the individual character and principles of each? The poet, the dramatist and the moralist may personate as many characters as he will and put into the mouths of these fictitious personages words most appropriate to each; words seemingly far remote from the author's own sentiments and feelings, but yet when it chanced that their own private opinions have to be spoken, or their individual feelings expressed, the words come with an energy and intensity of expression which betrays them as the author's own. To read *Paradise Lost* carefully one becomes again and again impressed with its author's own feelings upon the political and ecclesiastical turmoils of his time. The genius of the dramatist lies in his power to forget himself wholly in his character, or to transform himself into the hero whom he personates. In dramatic writing, Shakespeare, perhaps, stands first in excellence. But in his plays one frequently meets sentences weighty with a double meaning. Not only does the hero speak but the author through his hero, utters sentiments and emotions which he could not repress.

A book not only represents its author but it portrays either the best or the worst part of him. By the act of writing, the mind is ordinarily raised to its highest energy both of thought and feeling. It condenses and as it were intensifies itself; whatever is good into doubly good—whatever is bad into doubly bad. A book

therefore gives a picture of the author's inner self in forms enlarged and ideally improved. The colors are more intense, and more finely contrasted than seen in the man's ordinary life.

A good book, therefore, is sometimes of more value to the world than a good man, for it is the best part of a good man—the good without the evil. When a man dies, while his spirit is living on in one immortal world, he may also be living another immortality on earth. Milton used more than a figure when he says, "for books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a progeny of life in them as active as the soul whose progeny they are: nay, they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them. As good, almost, kill a good man as kill a good book; who kills a man, kills a reasonable creature, God's image; but he who destroys a book kills reason itself; kills the image of God as it were in the eye."

This brings us to the second question—What is it to read? What has already been said may perhaps suggest now the answer to this query. To read a book is to place ourselves in communication with a living man when every word is chosen before spoken. We must imagine ourselves for the time being in company with the author. The man who would read in the true significance of that term, must be able as he holds the book before his eyes to go with Chaucer to Canterbury, with Homer to the plains of Troy, with Dickens through the smoky streets of London, with Tyndall over the glaciers in the Alps, with the naturalist over caves and streams, with the journalist or reviewer into his study, as he sits surrounded by his books. We must take our seats by the side of Bacon, and receive his fragrant observations, which come to us like so many pearls, as they fell from the lips of the living man. If the author has given vent to his imagination, we must allow ours to follow his. To read Shakespeare intelligently one must re create in his own fancy those wonderful beings conceived in the mind of the great dramatist. To read that great poem of Milton's, we must go with its author to the very gates of heaven and look into the eternal city, till like him we become dazzled by the magnificence of the scene, overwhelmed by the splendid array of the angelic host, or confounded by the glimpses of the infinite glories of the "Uncreated and Eternal Jehovah," and then turn our eyes to where

"On a sudden, open fly,
With impetuous rattle and jarring sound,
The infernal doors."

and the Archangel ruined stands before us with his compeers—sublime in intellect, degraded by sin, scarred and seared by suffering, yet proud and unsubdued in their relentless wills.

After the reader has thus placed himself in the attitude described and has caught the words as if he really heard them fall from the lips of the writer, he must deal with the thoughts as with any others spoken in his hearing. Not necessarily believe unless he has some reason for believing. If two books make contrary statements, one is probably wrong, and both may be wrong. If a man writes great and beautiful truths it is well that we read them all, and then re-read and again, or in other words have the author repeat his wise sayings. If the book contains blasphemy and falsehood a very little will suffice. It would be folly to sit and listen by the hour to a man telling

lies, if we knew he was lying. Bacon couched much truth in a few words when he said, "Some books are made to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested."

Many people may be thought to read a great deal, who really read but little, in the true sense of the term. They read as many people hear, such as go from Sabbath to Sabbath and sit in the sanctuary; but were they asked what was the text, or what the general strain of the minister's discourse, they are lost. So, many people have a habit of perusing books and papers in a passive way, which is far from reading.

It is said of Edmund Burke that he read every book as if he were never to see it a second time, and thus made it his own, a possession for life. Were his example imitated more closely much time would certainly be saved that is now spent in recalling things half remembered—taking up the stitches of lost thought. It is not necessary in reading every book that we commence at the first page and pass the eye over every word from top to bottom of each successive page. Some books require this, others do not. The best readers are those who can take a book, and, turning first to the table of contents, and to this page and then to that, grasp the great thought of the author:—who can select the valuable as a magnet takes and holds the iron filings, scattered in a handful of sand:—who when they have found these choice morsels read them, as if they never expected to see the book a second time. Such individuals can do a vast amount of reading in a lifetime. The so-called readers are divided by Coleridge into four classes. "The first," says he, "may be compared to an hour glass, their reading being as sand which runs in and runs out, and leaves no vestige behind. A second class resembles a sponge, which imbibes everything, and returns it nearly in the same state only a little dirtier. A third class is like a jelly-bag which allows all that is pure to pass away and retains the refuse and dregs. The fourth class may be compared to the slave of Golconda who, casting aside all that is worthless, preserves only the pure gems." The last indeed conforms to my ideal of a reader. In this age of the world when thousands and tens of thousands of books are printed, it is highly important that every person who wishes to read should form a clear conception of what a book is:—that it is an individual's own expression of his thoughts in his strongest and most studied language; that it presents as true an image of the author's mind as any photograph does of his external form. It is a true picture because he has painted it himself. Every shade, every stroke every touch, is his own.

Having learned what a book is we next wish to know how to make it serviceable to us, in other words, what it is to read, so that amid the vast amount of literary matter we may read the greatest possible amount in the least possible time, and be best remunerated for the time thus spent.

W. STEWART BLACK.

We have received a well-written and spicy communication from "Zay" in reply to an editorial in the February number of the *Hesperian* entitled "Sectarianism in the University." We have concluded, however, not to publish it, as it seems hardly judicious to continue the discussion, begun several months ago, any further in the columns of the *STUDENT*.

Can you Forget me?

Can you forget me? I who have so cherished
The veriest trifle that was memory's link.
The roses that you gave me, although perished,
Were precious in my sight; they made me think
You took them in their scentless beauty stooping

From the warm shelter of the garden wall,
Autumn, into languid winter drooping,
Gave its last blossoms, opening but to fall.

Can you forget me? I am not relying
On plighted vows—alas! I know their worth:
Man's faith to woman is a trifle, dying
Upon the very breath that gave it birth.
But I remember hours of quiet gladness,
When, if the heart had truth it spoke it then.
When thoughts would sometimes take a tone of
sadness

And then unconsciously grow glad again.
Can you forget them?

Can you forget me? My whole soul was blended;
At least it sought to blend itself in thine;
My whole life's purpose, winning thee, seemed
ended:

Thou wert my heart's sweet home—my spirit's
shrine.

Can you forget me?—when the firelight burning,
Threw sudden gleams around the quiet room.
How would thy words, to long past memories
turning,

Trust me with thoughts soft as the shadowy
gloom!

Can you forget them?

Can you forget me? This is vainly tasking
The faithless heart where I, alas! am not.
Too well I know the idleness of asking—
The misery—of why I am forgot.
The happy hours that I have passed while kneeling

Half slave, half child, to gaze upon thy face.
But what to thee this passionate appealing—
Let my heart break—it is a common case.

You have forgotten me,
L. E. LANDON.

Selected by "MIRIAM WELTER."

Literature.

We see on every hand an endless sea of literature. Literature of all kinds and descriptions, and on every subject imaginable. There is scarcely a topic but has a thousand and one distinct sides, and upon each particular side, no two authors can precisely agree; hence the infinite variety and flood of ideas afloat. Fifty years ago, a hundred volumes were considered as quite a large library; to-day, two thousand are a comparatively small one. As people develop in common sense, our world of literature increases proportionately, and as gradually ebb away nonsensical fallacies. We will admit that two or three hundred years ago, certain classes of literature were originated which have never been surpassed; but their progenitors seemed to have been brilliant meteors, thrown by the hand of the Almighty into the midst of Ignorance to check the faltering and unsteady step of the masses, as they surged on in their superstitious lethargy.

It is true that we occasionally collide with human beings who are ten, fifty, or perhaps a hundred years behind the times; but then they are so odd that they are classed with walking mummies by Young America, and allowed to pass on their way rejoicing. Such are some of our religious fanatics, who still cling with a deathly grip to the old dogmas, and insist that villains of the lowest caste, including bandits and murderers, are placed on the same footing in eternity with honest and righteous men, and all rejoice together in the kingdom of Heaven; or, perchance, they go to the other extreme and say that three-fourths of humanity together with all infants who have not been baptised are doomed to a scorching, fiery hell of unutterable torment, to writhe in their agony forever. All of these extreme fallacies are advocated with a great deal of energy by those professing them, and well may they be, for people are