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Give The Young Folks Good Books To Read.

IF THE writer of this, or the reader of it, wishes to find out some fact about agriculture, for example, he first of all thinks of what book, or bulletin, or paper will most likely have such information in it. If he does not find the information in one book, he turns to another, and so on, until he locates it. If none of his books tell him, he consults some person who has access to other books. It is with him merely a process of investigation.

Suppose, however, some man who has not learned how to read for the purpose of securing information wishes to find out this same fact, what will he do? He can ask the folks he meets about it. He can trust to some happy chance to bring the information to him. He can sit down and try to reason it out for himself. All of which are very uncertain ways of obtaining what he needs, and all very wasteful of time and energy.

The man who does not read—who does not associate with books just as he does with people, turning to them not only for information, but also for amusement, for relaxation,

for inspiration, for the general development of mind and heart and spirit—is at a great disadvantage in the struggle of life, and this disadvantage is going to become greater and greater as the mass of men become more in the habit of making their own the stored-up knowledge and wisdom of the printed page.

Reading will not solve any farmer's problems for him, or do his work; but there is scarcely a problem he has to solve, scarcely a job he has to do, which judicious reading may not make easier for him. The old foolish prejudice against "book farming" is fast dying out. It is so palpably unreasonable for a farmer to think he can afford to neglect the multitude of things other men have found out about his work—things which are nearly all printed in periodicals or books—that when one is heard to say he "does not believe in such," most people put him down as a stupid sort of fellow—as he is likely to be.

There are still some such farmers, however, and, to be frank, there are few of us who have learned to read as much as we should, or to as much purpose as we might. The farmer who turns to his farm paper, or his bulletin to find out how to kill the bugs on his cabbage plants, or how to feed his calf, has learned to do one sort of reading, and is far advanced above the man who must go and ask a neighbor or who does it his own way and risks it; but this is only the first step in reading. He should also know how, when he is tired and needs to rest body and mind, to lose himself in a good story, or an interesting description. He should know to which books to turn for comfort and cheer when things go wrong. He should be able to strengthen his own soul with the wise words and the noble deeds of great men past.

He should know how to give instruction and inspiration—possibly finer and stronger than he himself could offer—to his children by giving them the right kind of books to read. In short, the man who has learned to read has not only the key to the storehouse of knowledge in his home, but is privileged to associate with the wisest and best of

all ages, if he will but make himself worthy of their company. The man who has not learned to read sees this door shut against him, and knows poets and sages only as meaningless names. To one who has not learned to read, and to think as he reads, Emerson would likely be a bore and Plato a weariness of soul.

Some of us have advanced far in years without having really learned to read. None of us need be discouraged on that account, for the pathway to knowledge and power through reading is so "full of goodly prospects" that it will be a constant delight to travel. Still, with all the progress he can make, the man who has waited until late in life to begin reading is not likely ever to derive all of the benefits

from it that he might have done had he begun earlier. There is one thing he can do, however; he can see that his children have good books, good magazines and good papers to read, and he can encourage and assist them in every way within his power to acquire the ability and the habit of reading, both to obtain knowledge and to add to their capacities for enjoyment and for usefulness.

He will fall short of his duties as a parent who does not see, in the first place, that his children get the schooling that will enable them to read and, in the second place, that they are given the best possible opportunities and every encouragement to practice the art they have learned and thus to add daily to their store of knowledge and their ability to think clearly and live right.

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