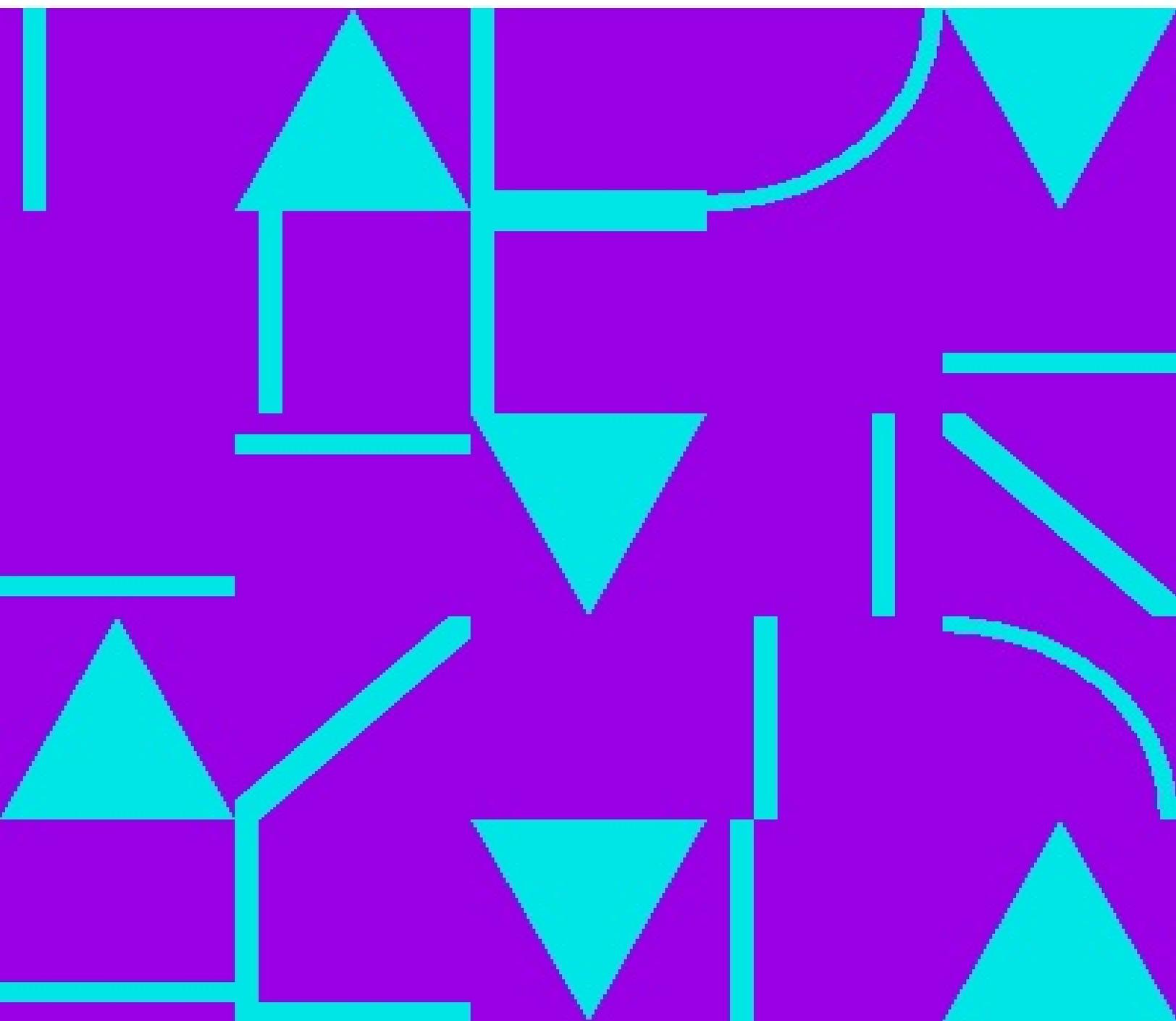


Talks to Freshman Girls

Helen Dawes Brown



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By Helen Dawes Brown
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"Little Miss Phœbe Gay."

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BOSTON AND NEW YORK

TALKS TO FRESHMAN GIRLS

BY

HELEN DAWES BROWN

Author of "Two College Girls"

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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TALKS TO FRESHMAN GIRLS

I—“STUDIES SERVE FOR DELIGHT, FOR ORNAMENT, AND FOR ABILITY”

No man could have written this sentence with more authority than Francis Bacon, for no man ever loved Studies better. In his youth he had declared passionately that he took all knowledge for his province, and it was his lifelong teaching that “the sovereignty of man lieth hid in knowledge.”

“Studies serve for delight, for ornament, and for ability.” I imagine Bacon writing these words with fervor, out of his own happy experience. At the age of thirty-five, he could determine what Studies had been worth to him. They had been his delight, his ornament, and the means to his usefulness.

For “delight” he wrote in his first edition “pastimes,” as he wrote “ornaments” and “abilities,” then wisely changed his sentence. His beautiful old word “delight” means, I take it, a heightened pleasure, a pleasure touched with imagination, full of suggestion and invitation.

I have a far glimpse of its meaning when I hear a young person say that she is going to college “to have a good time”; a good time for the rest of her life is what, I believe, Studies will secure to her. You are so young, I may speak to you of age. There is a new old age for women, with enlightened care of health and increasing intellectual interests. As for you freshmen, I have a vision of your erect forms and of your bright faces at seventy-five,—of your health and your gayety and your wisdom, you charming old ladies of 1970! Age cannot wither you, nor custom stale your infinite variety, you women whom Studies have served for delight.

And you are so happy that I may speak to you of unhappiness. We need three things to meet life with: a religion, an education, and a sense of humor. The pursuit of Studies is a refuge as well as a delight. Studies will fortify one to encounter loneliness, or ill-health, or losses of any kind soever. The chances of life are such that I believe a woman suffers from lack of an education more than a man does. He has a wider world to draw from; she has need of more within herself. When Bacon writes of the care of the body, he says that for our very health, we should “entertain studies that fill the mind with splendid and illustrious objects.”

In order that knowledge should be a delight, I submit that knowledge should be remembered. A certain man George Eliot describes, who had a sense of having had a liberal education until he tried to remember something! The “culture” of some people seems to consist in having heard a large number of proper names. “Oh, yes, I’ve *heard* of him”—the rest a blank. In our day, “mental training” has neglected the training of the memory. I even urge a considerable amount of old-fashioned memorizing. Lay up for yourselves treasure: possess for your own a sonnet of Shakespeare, a poem of Wordsworth, a passage of Bacon. Lay up also a good store of facts, such facts as will make the reading of the daily paper profitable. There is no surer test of your outfit of information. Shall we say that an educated person should be able to spell, pronounce, and reasonably explain about two thousand proper nouns?

When I dwell on the delight of Studies, I take no thought of ease. Let us have no royal road to learning, but meet valiantly all the hardships of the way. No girl of stamina is looking for “soft courses.” I trust that in your freshman year you are having just what Schiller meant when he talked of “sport in art”; I hope you are having sport in education, the spirited conquest of difficulty! Do you not feel the great adventure of

education, the romance of the quest of knowledge?

You should know the keen delight of competition, not so much with one another as with yourselves. The determination to equal yourself, to surpass yourself, is a fine incitement. "Set before thee thine own example," says Bacon again.

On the other hand, you have not discovered all the delight of Studies unless you have secured repose as well as excitement in your intellectual life. It is "the world's sweet inn from pain and wearisome turmoil." Only in quiet can you practice the abstraction and concentration that give you power as a thinker. I dare to say that education goes on with far too much chatter and sociability in all our colleges. True enough, you are not getting the complete delight of your studies unless you have the intellectual stimulus of companionship,—the friendship "that maketh daylight in the understanding." (Bacon again!) But you must have also the silence and the solitude in which to brood, and in which to give your imagination its chance for flight. Have you freshmen any long, dreaming twilights? Or have we all grown too busy—or too frivolous—to pause "between the dark and the daylight"? Sane, strong minds we want, but beautiful, poetic minds as well. The final delight of education is in that culture of the imagination that makes an idealist of every fine college girl.

Bacon himself said of Studies, "Their chief use for delight is in privateness and retiring." When he caused his essays to be translated into Latin, to get them safely out of perishable English, delight was there rendered "*meditationum voluptas*." That our twentieth-century girl should know an harmonious, well-balanced life, I would see her delighting in her joyous athletics, but acquiring also the *meditationum voluptas*, for which Studies have furnished her mind.

In my youth the word "ornament" was the word of dread in education. We earliest college girls scoffed at "accomplishments." Ornament stood to us for all that was smattering and frivolous in education. We were of the new order!

Since the day when ornament was the bugbear of woman's education, we have grown somewhat wiser. "Studies should serve for delight and for ornament," we now say gladly; education should make you a delight to yourself and it should make you a delight to other people. Said Poor Richard: "Hast thou virtue? Acquire also the graces and beauties of virtue." "Hast thou education? Acquire also the graces and beauties of education. Your common sense will save you from pedantry." You will not "make your knowledge a discomfort to your families," as Mr. Taft once gently expressed it in talking to college girls.

Shall ornament mean "accomplishments"? Why not? If I were you, I would do some one interesting, amusing, agreeable thing so well as to make a small art of it. Have some accomplishment that will render you interesting in your own home, entertaining to children and to grandmothers, and that will make you welcome in your own set.

I take ornament as including all the externals of education, and I ask, where does education show on the outside? One of its most exposed points is the letter that a woman writes. "A good address," in the old-fashioned phrase, is about the most valuable of worldly possessions. It should include a good address—a good manner and presence—upon paper. As for the letter, all your education leads up to it: its clearness, brevity, point, and grace. "Good sense brightly delivered," should describe a college girl's letter as well as one by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu.

In Bacon's opinion, the chief ornament bestowed by Studies was that of conversation (*orationis ornamentum*). In the matter and manner of discourse, education achieves its utmost. It tells upon conversation in obvious ways. Studies furnish the mind with matter worth talking about, and they give an appetite for ideas. It may be hoped that they give the sense of proportion in conversation, and prevent the educated woman from ever becoming that object of dread, "a talker." Most American women talk too

much, perhaps because they are so bright, and think of so many things to say! One hears the criticism: "She is a brilliant woman; she talks well; but she doesn't give the other person a chance." Does this pauseless talker forget what a delight is the educated listener, quick, responsive, eager for the other's thought? One of the finest ornaments education can bestow is the social grace of good listening.

Alas that it so often fails to bestow the ornament of good speech! The failure of the colleges in this matter is lamentable. Its importance is not brought home to individuals with sufficient severity. They are left in their carelessness and laziness, with the social stigma of bad speech upon them for life. The colleges should help to make ladies and gentlemen as well as scholars. "What a bright girl!" said the woman who sat next a college freshman at dinner, "but can the college do nothing to cure her abominable speech?"

I believe that whatever his early associations, the speech of an educated person lies within his choice. If he be a person of will, and of the right energy and ambition, he can conquer provincialism or inherited faults of speech. It means *caring* and *trying*. It takes character, in short. One of the best instances of achievement of cultivated speech is that of George Eliot, who by birth would have spoken a rich dialect.

Perhaps the subtlest ornament that education may confer is that which we call distinction. After the refining process of the four years in close association with noble things, "commonness" ought to be impossible. The beginning of distinction is simplicity and sincerity, all absence of affectation, pedantry, or the desire to make an impression. Education is an immense simplifier; it does away with so many unnecessary pretences.

Bacon sent a copy of the "Advancement of Learning" to a man whom he addressed thus: "Since you are one that was excellently bred in all learning, which I have ever noted to shine in all your speeches and behaviors." Such is Bacon's way of saying, "Abeunt studia in mores." Educated perceptions and a quickened imagination should make for intelligence in conduct, and for beauty in all human relations. The reasonableness of goodness appeals to one's intellect, while, on the other hand, one must have character to make his intellect tell.

When they praised Lady Margaret, Countess of Richmond, the great lady of her time, they said of her, "Every one that knew her loved her, and everything that she said or did became her." That is the woman of distinction, whether countess or college girl. "Every one that knew her loved her." Distinction is of a poor, cold quality which has not sympathy for its final charm.

If Studies give us delight within ourselves, and add to us, we fondly hope, such ornament without, what more may we expect from them? They fit us to take our share in the day's work. Studies serve us for ability. Says Kipling, "Knowledge gives us control of life, as the fish controls the water he swims in." The utilitarian view of education is very well, if kept in its proper place; but education, we all know, is for the making of a life as well as of a living. Some mothers used to say, "But my daughter isn't going to support herself; why should she go to college?" "For delight, for ornament, madam"; and I would add, "for ability and usefulness in any sphere whatever."

Bacon's exposition of his own text shows that he means by "ability" much what our New England aunts meant by "judgment." He says education is of use in "the plotting and marshalling of affairs." How does this planning and organizing go on? How does business move? By constant wise decisions. Good judgment, you say, is a matter of inborn common sense, and you don't get common sense by going to college. I am not so sure of that, though I grant it is better to inherit it from a grandmother. But certainly you are learning all the time at college "sense of proportion," "the fitness of things," "sweet reasonableness," which come near to being names for refined common sense.

Life is lived by innumerable decisions, great and small; and a person's happiness and success will depend much on making these decisions quickly, firmly, and wisely. The helpfulness and comfort that a

woman may give to others will consist more in her love and wisdom than in any material benefits she may be able to confer.

One field for the ability of the educated woman of our day is the making of a good home on a small income. She is the woman who will not, consciously or unconsciously, goad her husband to money-making. I should like a fresh sermon preached upon the text, "Blessed are the peacemakers." This time it should be of those blessed peacemakers who create the harmony, calm, and love of a happy home. That is the great task, the first task of women.

She has no doubt her civic duties, and again her education puts the edge on her abilities: she is a more valuable helper in the world's work. She may be a bread-winner, for herself and for others; and herein, perhaps, is the most simple and popular argument for a woman's pursuit of Studies, one so self-evident that I need not dwell upon it.

I have been speaking of an ideal education and of an ideal woman, but where should we consider them both if not in this very place? A college like yours aims at nothing less!

II—REAL READERS

“Do we make real readers of our students?” was the anxious question of a college president. I remembered his phrase when I read his annual report. “Most of these young people,” he said, “are to go out into ordinary life, into general pursuits, where the one chance of their maintaining their intellectual growth will come through stimulating them in these years to interest in some particular line which they may continue, in the midst of the general pressure of social, domestic, or professional life. Unless a student learn to read and love books, she will, in a large majority of cases, be thrown out of all relation to resources that are in any fair sense of the word intellectual.” He pleaded that to make a girl a real reader is to safeguard her intellectual life.

A student leaves college, not perhaps having read much, but knowing what she wants to read. Her education has been an appetizer; now she is invited to partake of the banquet.

“May good digestion wait on appetite,
And health on both.”

The hunger for books no doubt began with many of you as soon as you had learned your alphabet. It was very likely hereditary. Indeed, the ideal way to become a lover of books is to be, like Mary Lamb, “tumbled at an early age into a spacious closet of good old English reading.” Fortunate for you, if you have had a grandfather who reluctantly puts off his reading-glasses as dinner is announced, or a grandmother who hides a book in her work-basket. For the real reader has a book close by; he does not walk across the room for it. If your busy father and mother still find time to read a new book and talk about it, then you and your brother Dick will be readers, and you will never know why. Reading is the most catching thing in the world. When school and college shall have added their stimulus, the prospect is good for a “full-blooded reader.”

If a girl should not come out of a reading home, it may be hoped that she will fall into the hands of a book-loving teacher. There are two women in the American town who are to be envied for their opportunity: one is the teacher of “Literature” in the High School, and the other is the librarian of the Public Library. Both may say, in words of the Oriental proverb, “I will make thee to love literature, thy mother; I will make its beauties to pass before thee.”

“Greedy of books,”—so Petrarch described himself; and he himself was the first great reader of modern times. I like these metaphors of the body applied to reading. The books that feed the mind, the nourishing books, are they not the ones that last and live? The hunger for books has its rhythm like the hunger for meat. Observe that the real reader reads regularly,—he has to. The regularity is unconscious: a healthy appetite does not keep one eye on the clock. The healthy reader feels faint and hollow for lack of nourishment: he seeks a book and he is content.

He reads from the simplest motives: in fact, he is a rather irresponsible person. He reads for the sense of life: he eats to live, he reads to live. He is not fiercely following up a subject; he is not pursuing references. That is another field of reading, which has its necessary and stimulating part in the intellectual life. Reading to order is indispensable to a student’s work; but the fear is, lest “reading up” may leave no

time for reading. "I get no time to read," is about the most disheartening thing I hear from college boys and girls. A university librarian said the other day that in their freshman year, students drew books from the library for general reading, but after that year no student entered the library unless obliged to. I found a high school boy working out a problem about pressures and resistances; he looked up gleefully, "This isn't for *school*; this is for myself!" It is reading for yourself, reading for fun, that I am pleading for.

Yet you, too, say that there is no time in college for reading. I assure you there is a great deal more time than you think there is. What are the things that you might just as well *not* have done to-day? One of the busiest of men, Matthew Arnold, wrote: "The plea that this or that man has no time for culture will vanish as soon as we desire culture so much that we begin to examine seriously our present use of our time. Give to any man all the time that he now wastes, on useless business, wearisome or deteriorating amusements, trivial letter-writing, random reading, and he will have plenty of time for culture. Some of us waste all our time, most of us waste much of it, but all of us waste some."

Culture was in my youth a word to conjure with. Somehow of late it has become separated from education and almost opposed to it. Culture is suspected by one of being dilettante, by another, of being selfish. Let us have a reconciliation of education and culture, and see that they go on together.

The real reader is active, not passive. There are people who look upon a book as that which best brings on an afternoon nap: something for the dull hours of the day, to quiet one's nerves, "to take one's mind off." Much writing does appear to have been done for tired people. Real reading, however, is not a stop-gap. We should take up a book while the mind has a good grip and can do its part.

As you who are city-bred ride from end to end of this country, through prairie villages, mountain hamlets, valley towns, you wonder what makes these out-of-the-world places habitable. But I assure you, that prairie town is not so dead a level as it looks, for there is a woman's club, and there is a public library, and there are young people going to college. It is books that make such places habitable.

The real reader is fortified against solitude, even that worst of solitudes, a company in which he dare not speak of a book. Books prepare you to live in strange places, as often falls to the lot of the American woman. You may marry a missionary or an army officer; you may go to the Klondike or the Philippines. "You could set that woman down anywhere," said a mourning widower, in praise of his departed wife. You can set the real reader down anywhere. For one small matter, it is something to be made independent of weather!

The reader, grown old, has youth at his beck and can forget the passage of years. Place is no more to him than time; he is master of his fate. Reading, also, is "the poor man's wealth, the prisoner's release."

Our reader is patient; he will put up with a good deal from his author,—as for instance, when he reads Meredith or Browning. He is patient of dullness as well as of eccentricity. Lowell's "dogged reading" has to go to the ripened experience of the trained reader: it is required of him that he do a certain amount of unprofitable reading in the forming of his critical judgment.

He must be patient and he must be calm. Quick and complete absorption is the mark of the happy reader. He is sincere and he is modest; his reading is not for show.

Common sense tells the reader when and where he may talk about books. Happy the family that read the same books: happier still the family that can talk about them! Love of reading is the best safeguard against gossip, and against excessive talking. One woman of your acquaintance fills every gap with talk; another fills the pauses of the day with reading.

In this country that boasts no class distinctions, we, nevertheless, have a class at the very top: the privileged caste of readers. What a freemasonry there is among them! They "speak the same language";

they toss about allusions; they dare to quote to one another; they take worlds for granted. But if you belong to this aristocracy, beware of snobbishness. The snobbishness of culture is the most contemptible of all, for culture knows better. The other “snobbishness” is based on pure ignorance of the true values of life, and has so far excuse.

People of moderate means probably make the best readers, because they have the largest share of rational leisure. The very poor and the very rich know not leisure, and its graces and benefactions. “Give me neither poverty nor riches”—such would be the best condition for the intellectual life. Miss Jeannette Gilder once drew a pleasant picture: as she passed along a Boston street of a winter evening, she noted the friendly custom of leaving up the window shades, and letting the light and cheer of the home shine forth upon the wayfarer. But to her New York eyes it was a striking fact that these Boston families sat reading by the evening lamp; that appeared to be their regular nightly occupation. She carried away the feeling that the good old Boston of Emerson and Lowell and Longfellow was not altogether vanished.

A bookless home! Was ever such suggestion of dreariness! The reader, if he own anything, will own some books. They need not be many. Some of the greatest readers have had but a modest number. Those few volumes go far to furnish your home. No wall covering is so rich. When the western light strikes across your bookshelves,—and no library should be without its western window,—the blended colors of those goodly volumes convey the charm of even the outside of literature. I like Montaigne’s way of saying, “As soon as I was able, I hired a spacious house in the city, for myself and books; where I again, with rapture, resumed my literary pursuits.” “A house for myself and books!”

No; your books need not be many. They will be more to you if you have made sacrifices for their sake,—as Charles Lamb did in the days when his purchase was not merely a purchase, but nothing short of a victory. If you own but few books, you will know the pleasures of re-reading. You will find the second reading fixes a book, gives you its essence and its true proportions. Yet it is rather the intimacies and friendships among books re-read that I have in mind, when they become all interwoven with endearing memories and associations. Every ten years you become a wiser reader and turn a new light upon your author. I imagine three tests of a book: do you read it aloud?—do you give it away?—but above all, do you read it a second time?

Your reading should have much variety, ranging from the newspapers to the great poets. Of course we must know what the great world is about and must live in our own age; but the little world of the newspapers let us waste no time upon. Said Matthew Arnold again: “Reading a good book is a discipline such as no reading of even good newspapers can ever give.” Scrappy reading makes scrappy minds, for it destroys power of attention.

I believe that there should be a backbone of History throughout your lifetime of reading. Be sure to choose first-rate historical books; never waste yourself upon second-rate histories. Biography, I am aware, is middle-aged reading; and I can only promise you immense pleasure from it when you are past forty. Those large, heavy volumes in dull bindings, which did not invite your youth, will become alive and significant, and full of good society.

I have never seen a college girl who did not enjoy reading essays, whatever her sentiment about writing them. Essays, too, are good society, the companionship of fine minds giving you their best. This literary form, with its modest, careless name, has yet the widest range in all literature. Nothing human is alien to it. If you read “for the sense of life,” a good essay will give you precisely that.

Books of travel are especially good to read after you have traveled. One glimpse of the Old World, for example, gives you the clue, the key, which makes books and pictures intelligible to the imagination ever after. When once you have this clue, you can read far beyond your own travels. And while you are on the

road, do a little reading day by day,—Henry James’s “Little Tour in France” while you are making that very tour; Hawthorne’s “Our Old Home,” while you, too, are in England. In foreign lands read a newspaper of the country, and read a novel by its best writer of fiction.

Said that fine old novel-reader, Professor Jowett, of Baliol, when he was writing to a young lady, “Have you thoroughly made yourself up in Miss Austen and the ‘Vicar of Wakefield’? No person is educated who doesn’t know them.” Good fiction educates not only the intellect but the heart. It enriches the imagination and the sympathies, and “teaches us to walk not by sight but by insight.” This is fiction fair, and with fiction foul, why should we concern ourselves?

“Who reads poetry nowadays?” people are asking miserably. My real reader, I answer with confidence. He must have poetry, and why he must, Richard Crashaw’s friend said once for all in the quaint preface to the poet’s verses: “Maist thou take a poem hence and tune thy soul by it into a heavenly pitch.”

Another old writer once described the four classes of readers: “Sponges which attract all without distinguishing; hour-glasses which receive and pour out as fast; bags which only retain the dregs, and let the wine escape; and sieves which retain the best only.” I am now, of course, addressing the sieves. Real readers need not take high moral ground about trash; they are simply bored by it. A publisher said the other day that he must publish a certain amount of trash in order to be able to publish some good books. He needs a body of better readers. Mediocre readers make mediocre books.

Superior people, however, are often disloyal to their own standards. You are, for example, untrue to yourself, if you sit at a theater assisting—admirable French word!—at a play that your whole soul rejects. It is like a breach of faith to read a book which is moral trash or literary trash. No mind is safe from the suggestion of such plays or such books. Said Fielding, “We are as liable to be corrupted by books as by companions.” Happily it is just as true that we are as liable to be purified by books as by companions.

To be quite fair, we must acknowledge some dangers of reading. You remember Kipling’s bank clerk, who in a previous incarnation had been a Viking, and who might have written tales as good as Kipling’s own had he not been so steeped in English literature. I have known people who had plainly been dulled by over-reading: they were the “sponges” of our old writer. Over every book we should think at least as long a time as we spend in the reading. I notice the real reader frequently looks up and off from his book, to think the better.

Ask from your book not only ideas, but style. Careless readers have permitted slipshod books. The writer says to himself, “This is quite good enough for the people who are likely to read it.” He is fond of the simile of the pearls and the swine, confident that it is the swine who have thwarted his genius. Real readers help to make real writers.

Who are some of the real readers we have known? There is Chaucer’s Clerk of Oxenford. He owned books, poor as he was; he kept them at the head of his bed; and there you have two unfailing marks of the real reader. (I even like that dash of color,—the “black or red” of his bindings; for the real reader loves the outside of his book as well.)

I think of Milton, who made the most beautiful definition of a book I know—“the precious life-blood of a master spirit, treasured up on purpose to a Life beyond Life.” None but a real reader could have so nobly imagined the book and its author.

When Keats read Chapman’s Homer and said that a new planet swam into his ken, he expressed for all readers the sense of surprise, of discovery, and of acquisition when they have found a real book.

Into this noble fellowship you and I are allowed to enter, as we leave our college.

III—THE USE OF THE PEN

Says the census-taker once in ten years, "Can you write English?" We are a bit startled by the question: "Can we?" we ask ourselves humbly. It is the question I ask you freshmen.

The educated person has the implements of writing at hand and in order: his inkstand is filled and his pen does not scratch. The uneducated man searches for a penholder, and keeps the ink-bottle on the top shelf; and the difference signifies much in the lives of the two people.

You live pen in hand during your four years in college. You acquire the useful art of note-taking,—by itself no mean intellectual exercise. The untrained note-taker brings from a lecture a rare muddle of senseless, half-caught remarks. But a good mind soon shows itself in its taking of "points" and getting them quickly to paper. And who does not know that "a note taken on the spot is worth a cartload of recollections"?

That a notebook should be attractive and convenient for reference is its *raison d'être*. One secret of comfort in notebooks is variety in covers, that there may be no exasperating searches for the right one. "Buy only good-looking notebooks," sounds like frivolous advice; but it is in the interests of scholarship that your notebooks should have an honorable place on your bookshelves. I would make a handsome page, with wide margins, large type, generous spacing. Paragraph freely, and drop a line often. Underline profusely, that you may catch the meaning quickly, and preserve the emphasis of the lecturer. Use parentheses, brackets, numerals, letters, and thus organize your matter as you go along and make it easy to glance at. Have divisions or pigeonholes at the back of your book, where you can put away and classify all sorts of memoranda.

With these mechanical devices, the use of the pen becomes the easier. It will be able to shape sentences on the wing, and capture the thought and much of the language of a lecturer in full flight. It is a strenuous exercise, and good mental athletics.

Yet for all education to be carried on in this way would not be well. There should be variety in the conduct of classes. That comes of itself, through the varied personality of teachers. The next man may make of his hour a quiz. Does anything remain of a quiz that can be written down? A good exercise for the pen to shape something out of the flying questions and answers!

You live pen in hand in the classroom, and also in the preparation of your work. Note-taking in a library is a fine process in education. Unless your book is a masterpiece of style, paraphrase and condense for your notebook. Add your own thoughts, in brackets. A book thus read is twice yours. I would date every piece of note-taking; for the autobiography of your mind is writing itself.

In these college exercises your pen has acquired practice, and to turn it next to use for artistic purposes should be natural. For it is the literary art that you are set to study. When you are asked to write your first freshman essay, you are asked to turn life into literature. Shakespeare did no more than that. This single, exalted aim should be yours: and you should remember in your humblest writing Ruskin's definition of the artist. He is "a person who has submitted in his work to a law which was painful to obey, that he may bestow by his work a delight which it is gracious to bestow."

The literary art as practiced in college goes by the excellent name "essay-writing": a comprehensive, modest, dignified word. It gives you liberty to write about anything; and if you happen to have the literary instinct, everything will present itself to you as waiting to be written about. To turn into words is the impulse of the born writer, like Irving, or Emerson, or Stevenson. There is probably one such person in this company, possibly there are two. But it is to the average young essay-writer that I address myself.

As to the matter of which you make your essays, only let it be "the real thing": a piece of yourself, one of your own interests. You have active minds, or you would never be here: to you "the world is so full of a number of things" that subjects can never fail you. The fact that you expect to write much during your college life is stimulating to your observation. You are "out after ideas," as a college girl expressed it. You look and listen and read with an eye on your next essay. Once set up a subject in your mind, and it gathers material as a magnet draws steel. Everybody is conspiring to help you with fresh points of view and apt illustrations. You have heard of Madame de Staël's method: when preparing to write, she gave a dinner-party and led up the conversation of her guests to the subject she had chosen. Your essay will also require solitude and brooding, long walks alone, and possibly hours in the library.

When you begin to write, write rapidly, even if you leave many gaps and many crudities. You will then have something to work upon. Moreover, the mere act of writing is stimulating to thought. *Movendo move*: move by moving. By writing, write. "I stared at the page an hour before I had a thought," says one miserable young woman. Keep on looking at your paper. Things will come to you, you know not whence; but you must prepare the way for them, by thinking and feeling and dreaming, by reading and listening and observing, with every part of you alive and receptive. Then wait for yourself patiently.

It is for most people unprofitable to correct their work as they write, because the productive state of mind and the critical state of mind are quite apart. There should be the hot writing and the cool writing. The fatal thing is to cool off in the first writing: you will soon be "grinding out" your essay. When the time comes for the critical re-writing, remember what Schiller said, "By what he omits, show me the artist." There is a hard saying, "Art is the rejection of the almost right."

Yet when you subject your work to pitiless cutting, see that you do not destroy its flow and rhythm. Look carefully to the little connectives that bind up the thought, words that are only too rare in our English language. The delicate *nuances* of meaning are indicated and the harmony of the sentence is preserved by the judicious placing of these little words. In revision study to improve the diction. Insert trial words each time that you read your paper. Use every means to enrich your vocabulary and to widen your choice of words. Be able to run your fingers over that loved instrument, the English language, as a musician lets his hands play over his keys.

Precision in diction is the mark of intellect, but also of patient labor. Stevenson said the man not willing to spend the whole afternoon in search of the right word was unfit for the business of literature. Be unsparing of your time. The silliest boast is of the short time a writer has spent upon his work. Authors' vanity is peculiarly distasteful, because they are the people from whom one might expect more intelligence.

The force, that is, the interest, of your writing, will depend much on the freshness of your choice of words, and on the freshness of your phrasing. Yet in the pursuit of freshness, beware of affected or far-fetched words, or words too old, as "gotten"; or too new, as "viewpoint," "foreword," words that, for mere ugliness, should not be allowed to exist.

Write with words, not phrases. Commonplace writing is composed of "bromidic" phrases. They are very catching. Excessive reading, unaccompanied by thinking, is sure to produce a stilted, conventional style. I wonder if college girls know how often they are, even in conversation, stilted in their language, though

often with a half-humorous intent. I have noticed one who uses a Latin participial construction even at the breakfast table.

In order to be vigorous, your writing must be brief, simple, and clear. Yet in our cult of simplicity, let us not be content with the clear and simple commonplace. Some books nowadays, though written by the cleverest of men, have a commonness of style that is a mere coming down to their inferiors. It will never make literature.

Put into your notebook what writers have said about their craft. You will find in Shakespeare some admirable hints about his art, though people often tell us he gave no account of himself. Modern self-consciousness has made authors more and more aware of themselves and their processes. Mark what Goethe, Emerson, and all our later writers have said of their work. In my college days, we read the old writers upon these subjects: the incomparable "Ars Poetica" of Horace, and the pleasant pages of Quintilian. Do you read them now?

How reading should help writing is a question. I have heard it said that a professional writer should read some other more excellent writer one hour a day! How far we should take another writer for master is very doubtful. Said a Michigan man to Mr. Emerson, as he came out from a lecture, "Mr. Emerson, I see you never learned to write from a book." It goes without saying that we want only original, first-hand work from our writer; nevertheless, it is true that he may learn something about his art from nearly every book he reads. You yourselves are observing readers; observe, among other things, how the thing is done.

Beyond and out of college, the educated woman should live pen in hand. Power of expression is power itself, and expression with the pen will add much to a woman's efficiency as a member of society. With many business careers opening to her, success depends not a little on the ability to write an admirable business letter. Her usefulness as a secretary hangs on the efficiency of her pen. A teacher's letter of application often settles her fate. The librarian will introduce books to readers all the more effectively if she hold the pen of the ready writer. The college woman should be valuable in many branches of journalism. In philanthropic work, occasions arise for wise, tactful, brief, effective composition, in letters, reports, and public addresses. The pen is not enough used in preparation for speaking. We should be spared many a rambling discourse if the orator had first submitted to its discipline.

The club paper has a place in many women's lives. Few of them take it seriously enough. If they have possession of an hour's time of fifty women, they should give their utmost as an equivalent for fifty hours of human life. To make her club paper worth while, a woman should have lived pen in hand for a year, reading, thinking, taking notes. The paper of the educated woman should be reasoned, ordered, and shapely, while every sentence should have its meaning. As John Synge said of a play: "Every speech should be as fully flavored as a nut or an apple." This is not the club paper of the lady who rises with smiling apology, "I have had very little time to prepare this paper. I really did not begin to write it until night before last."

Whether women desire it or not, they are destined to take more and more part in public life, and whatever they may be called upon to do, they will find that "Have it in writing" is one of the best maxims of the great world they are entering.

I would, however, have you first regard the use of the pen in letter-writing, in preserving the unity and love of the family, in cherishing friendship, in sweetening human intercourse. It makes society of solitude for the lonely woman, or for the invalid, or for the aged. Reading and writing together are proof against loneliness.

By all means, use the pen as a means of efficiency and of happiness, but I would even cultivate writing for writing's sake. I would dabble in it as an amateur! It is worth while to draw and sketch for the training of

the eye, and for the greater appreciation of others' work. Write, and you will be a far better reader. You help to create a literary atmosphere in which some one else can write better than without you, as musicians say that an orchestra must have players in the audience. Writers need the understanding reader. We have not yet in our country a large enough body of eager, expectant readers, of literary sympathies. Moreover, it seems a law of Nature that, if many are writing and keenly interested in literature, out of such an environment a great writer is sure in time to emerge.

By writing you may discover yourself. The call may come to you, and nothing then can stop you. You will say, like Carlyle, "Had I but two potatoes in the world and one true idea, I should hold it my duty to part with one potato for pen and ink, and live upon the other till I got it written."

The woman of letters is a type sure to develop from the present intellectual training of women. Such a vocation should not take her apart from the great experiences of womanhood: these should but make her the better writer. Her career of writer will be a higher education in itself, a steady intellectual and moral development. I urge you to write because it will hold you to the ideal; it will develop the philosophic mind; it will stimulate character and intellect. It opens vistas of happiness, as the practice of every art does. To know the joys of the creative artist one needs not to write a novel or a drama. He can know them from a letter, happily written, or even from a fortunate phrase that has come to him.

Whether or not such writing bring you fame and money, it will have given you something no one can take away from you. The modest person of a quiet mind who does her best and thinks not much about the consequences, this person shares some of the sweets of authorship with those she knows to be her betters. The perquisites of the writer are many: the good society; the sympathy, sometimes the love, of strangers; the mysterious and fascinating communication with one's fellow-men.

People ask why college women have not distinguished themselves in literature. Colleges for women began as our great literary period in America was drawing to a close. If women have not been notable in our literature in the last fifty years, neither have we had another Emerson or Hawthorne. American intellect has expressed itself in other and wonderful ways, but not in great poetry or prose.

Women have not yet had a long enough trial of education to be adjusted to the new conditions it has made for them. They have had culture sufficient to make them critical, but not creative; to make them modest and distrustful of their own work, but not greatly daring in any art. They do small things delicately and delightfully, but the great works are still to come. Women need more power to the elbow. They need a richer tradition, and growth from a deeper soil; for a writer oftenest ripens through generations of readers and thinkers.

Do not let this discourage you. Each of us may in our day contribute to the progress of American literature; for we are helping to make the tastes and traditions out of which in a later generation a great poet may arise.

IV—EVERYDAY LIVING

The freshman girl is happy who, in her preparation for college, has included some knowledge of the art of living with others. Miss Ellen Emerson once read aloud to our Sunday-School class an essay by Sir Arthur Helps on this very subject. One sentence I remember: "A thorough conviction of the difference of men is the great thing to be assured of in social knowledge: it is to life what Newton's law is to astronomy." Miss Ellen paused, and bade us not forget that saying. The girl who goes to college prepared to find people "different" has a mastery of the situation.

I would have assigned her, as a piece of college preparation, a few good magazine articles about the United States, with three or four of the best new books about her country. These would make her glad to talk with a student from Oregon on her right and a girl from Boston on her left at that first homesick supper-time. She is, perhaps, a provincial New York City girl, who has never seen anything but Europe and her own town. Her horizon will at once widen at college.

Not that open-mindedness requires you to abandon your own beliefs. College preparation should include Convictions. Truth and honesty there cannot be two opinions about; and in the art of living with others truth and honesty bear a great part. Said Oliver Cromwell, "Give me a man that hath principle—I know where to have him."

A girl should have had some preparation in business habits for living with others in college. Plain business honesty is a "college requirement." Borrowing is, I fear, one of the sins of student life. Girls of your breeding do not borrow wearing apparel or personal belongings. But a borrowed postage stamp or a car-fare is a matter of business honor. So is punctuality; the robbery of other people's time is petty larceny. Integrity, uprightness, enter into the art of living with others, every hour of the day. The girl who is scrupulously delicate about other persons' rights and possessions is the girl you find easy to live with.

Teachableness is a charming quality in a freshman, in or out of class: a little wonder and awe become her. A newcomer who "knows it all" is unbearable. Meekness is an old-fashioned virtue, not enough appreciated in these days. Yet who does not feel its charm in the unassuming woman, ready to learn, and to reverence superiority?

Prepare yourself to be at first of not much importance, to be outshone in recitation, to work hard without much recognition; but you will find soon that a teacher will grow to rely on you, will meet your eye, will welcome your response; and before you are aware, you and she will have laid the foundation of a lifelong sympathy and friendship. And, when all is said, the art of living with others is the art of making friends.

Do not forget your old friends. When you travel abroad, one of the most important subjects you learn about is America; when you go to college, you learn to know your home. The first ache of homesickness will teach you much. It would mean something very sad if you did not feel it. You would lose one of the tenderest experiences. When the pain softens, you find you understand your home and your dear ones as you never did before. That is the reward of the freshman's homesickness.

There will quickly come new interests, but do not become so absorbed in them as to lose this new relation to your home. Much as the friends there miss you, your college life may be made a constant

pleasure to them. Let us hope that your “preparatory English” has made you a good letter-writer. Write clearly and legibly, with loving care, that your father may not say, “Am I wasting a college education on a girl that can’t even spell?” and that your mother need not sigh, “There is a word I shall have to give up.” The illiteracy of collegians of both sexes I know to be a source of pain to parents who sit deciphering their letters by the evening lamp. It is all a question of your taking trouble, and of your thoughtful consideration for others.

Literacy attained, see that your letter gives pleasure, and that it share with your parents the fun and interest of your college life. See that it “make old hearts young.” Don’t send home a letter without a laugh in it. And pray write occasionally to an uncle or an aunt!

Do not drop your old acquaintance when you go away from home. Perhaps you have some humble village friends, to whom it seems a fine, romantic thing that you have “gone off to college.” Every person whom you know may be in some way pleased and benefited by your experience. There are little girls who are examining you as only a little girl can, and are making up their minds whether they, too, will go to college some day. When you see this bright child peering at you,—there is your chance to be something adorable!

No one follows you with more sympathy than the teachers who have fitted you for college. They have a share in you, remember; for teachers have a reward beyond money in the futures of their pupils.

We speak of college girls as if they had departed for the cloister; but reckoning by weeks, how large a proportion of their time is spent at home! In short vacations the unselfish mother plans all sorts of pleasures for her daughter, and perhaps says sadly at the end, “I saw little of Ruth. She made or received visits all the fortnight.” The short vacations should, I think, belong to your parents: the summer gives time for other friends. Some day you will understand what it has cost your father and mother to send you out of their sight just as you have become most companionable to them.

In the case of some of you there are sacrifices made at home that you may go to college; and you will bravely share with your parents the “doing without” that is making your liberal education possible. Your social position in these next four years does not depend on money: it does depend on intellect and character; on taste, not expense, in dress and belongings; and on the traditions that you bring with you. “To him that hath shall be given.” The girl who takes something to college gets more, as, when she travels, she gains in proportion to what she carries with her. For example, if you take to college the family tradition of reading, your college lot is a happier one.

The poor girl in college has certain advantages: she is respected for the effort she has made to get there; she at once excites the interest of her teachers; she finds herself in an atmosphere of sympathy and encouragement. She is generously praised, and is made happy by the appreciation of her gifts. Let her guard against vanity and priggishness. The poor and brilliant girl has her own temptations.

If she suffer in some things because of her poverty, it does not matter much. Privations, if they do not injure health, are bracing and tonic. A girl will learn at college, if anywhere, how to be rich though poor. She could be placed in no situation where she could more successfully ignore poverty. Simplicity in dress is “good form” in college. The fatal word “vulgar” is fixed by the initiated upon display, or extremes of fashion. Taste and neatness are luxuries within the reach of girls of small means.

The rich girl has her difficulties. She is often handicapped by poor preparation, which is not so much the fault of her fitting school as of her social life too soon begun. She has had many distractions, with less serious labor of preparation. College routine will be at first irksome to her; but if she has chosen to go to college, she has stuff in her, and she can make of herself the finest type of student. Her money will be “means,” and she will learn noble ways of spending it. Many is the rich girl who is secretly helping a poor girl to get her education.

Rich appointments make a girl's way harder at college, on the whole. Scholars are distrustful of the appearances of wealth, sometimes unjustly. The wise college girl will cultivate simplicity, that she may be in harmony with her surroundings, and that she may have a free mind.

The girl of wealth may lack the element of the heroic and the romantic in the college career of the poor girl, but her compensations are that she can command all means of culture; she can travel, buy books, visit cities, and meet significant people. Her wealth buys her a wider life; while the girl of small means has one more concentrated and intense. Her pleasures may be keener because they are conquests; she relies on herself and develops her own resources. We will wait to judge the two until they are forty.

Health is one of your "college duties"; so is happiness.

"If I have faltered more or less
In my great task of happiness,"—

wrote Robert Louis Stevenson. He was a master of gallant living. He really had something to whine about, but he lived with all his colors flying.

However, I shall not deny that there are "blues" peculiar to college life. Occasionally they will be part of your education. There will be wounds to your vanity; and years afterwards you will remember the snub of some brusque, brilliant professor and will smile to think how much you learned by it. You will see another girl surpass you, and envy will give you a fit of the blues; for envy always punishes itself. The college has, on the whole, an atmosphere of noble feeling, of "admiration, hope, and love"; but a sin that some college girls have to fight is the ugly sin of envy. Jealousy is akin to it, and is sure to enter into narrow, intense friendships. The remedy is many friends and many interests.

A genuine source of blues is disappointment in one's self. I wonder if you will believe an old college girl's experience that an occasional bracing failure is the best thing that can happen to you. It will help you to keep your balance, and to know yourself. Moreover, it will rouse you as nothing else will.

Trifles loom large in college life, its critics say. A freshman's world looks black to-day because of a bad recitation or a neglectful friend. I do not reason away her troubles: I only remind her of Abraham Lincoln's remedy for the blues (and he knew well what they were). "Remember," he said, "that they don't last." Also I would set her to some absorbing task: "work is good company," and compels her to think about what she is doing and not of her troubles.

It was recorded upon the tomb of a Roman lady long ago, "She made nobody sad." Make nobody sad with your woes, or your face, or your voice. And if you wish to cheer yourself, cheer somebody else. You very likely need rest for your nerves. College girls wear upon themselves and upon one another by too much talking. Their minds are so mutually stimulating that they need rest from their own company. One of the first conditions for a satisfactory intellectual life is a room to one's self. The college girl who cannot command it should spend much time alone out of doors, even if she carry with her a book.

When the college day is ended, and you look back over its hours, what will have made its success, and what will have made its happiness? Have you been "nobly busy"? I leave to you the answer.

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