

Some years ago a most deserving person, who burnt with a desire to improve the world, published a list of "One hundred best books," a sort of catalogue of a literary jumble sale; people, certain people, have ever since been trying to adjust their tastes in reading to that artificial standard. They had a kind of idea it spelt culture.

Looking back, I cannot remember a time when I did not love reading, when a book—the right book—was not a pure joy to me. When I was a very young child I was allowed to browse at will in my father's library, and I made friends then that have lasted me my life. There are books I have read again and again simply for the pleasure of meeting friends, such as *Elderhard*, or *d'Artagnan*, or *Esmond*, or *John Inglesant*, or *Dorothy Brooke*, and hosts of others, many of whom I know far better than my living acquaintances. What emotions, what joys, what sorrows, what adventures I have encountered in their company. How I have revelled in the glories of Louis XIV.'s court, how I have stormed Rome with the German *langknechts*, how I have trembled in the Reign of Terror; I have taken field with Prince Rupert and his Cavaliers; I have founded American colonies and fought Red Indians with the author of a brown faded book of the beginning of last century—"printed in Washington"; I went "*Across Africa*" with Cameron, a book I loved, whilst I found Stanley a bore; and I traced the sources of the Nile with Butler; I have taken observations and linked the Alps with Tindall; I have known the deepest sorrow of womanhood with Gretchen; I have touched the fringe of pure intellectual rapture with Spinoza and Kant.

And the poets, from the time when as a child I revelled in Macaulay's straightforward, bloodthirsty Lays of Ancient Rome, and Scott's delightful narrative ballads, Schiller's *Don Carlos* (which seemed to me the last word of romance and tragedy), throughout all my life they have, perhaps, given me my keenest delight. Favourite poets! I have favourite poems by more poets than I can enumerate in three languages, for though all books lose enormously when translated, poems are impossible in any but the language that gave them birth. I will not give a cut and dried list of the verses I love—all who are subjects, and can enter into the charmed kingdom, of poetry know them quite well, and the others do not matter.

There are some books to which you abandon yourself for their pure beauty of style, often books "without any core," as the Germans say. I have such a book in my mind now; it entralls me and leads me on just by the just and beautiful proportions of its sentences, its flowing ease, no word out of place; you float happily on its stream, a stream that placidly leads to nowhere. It is a most restful volume.

"But," says the editor (most annoying person

an editor), "you give no advice as to the best books for nurses to read, or, in fact, anyone."

"True, all true, and overtrue, dearest Editor, and I will rectify the mistake at once. Read, my dear fellow-nurses, just what you like, just what interests you, just what takes you into the beautiful realms of fancy, of might have been, of the ideal. If you are born readers, the driest facts that appeal to you will have a beauty and interest all their own; if you are not, nothing on earth will make you so."

M. MOLLET.

Echoes of the Washington Convention.

Miss Mary L. Keith, Superintendent of the City Hospital, Rochester, U.S.A., a post, by-the-bye, created by Miss Palmer, Editor-in-Chief of the *American Journal of Nursing*, read a Paper on The Introduction of District Nursing into the Training-School Curriculum, at the Nurses' Convention at Washington, which brought out some interesting points in discussion.

Miss Keith incidentally shows that in the organisation of District Nursing—that is, of the nursing of the sick poor in their own homes—the United States is away back of us, and that so far nothing analogous to our Queen's Jubilee Institute in the way of national organisation is in force. Cities urged by graduate nurses are awakening to their responsibilities in this connection, but there is neither State nor national co operation on the question. Things appear fitfully done—the Nurses' Settlement in New York and city associations, like the Visiting Nurse Association in Chicago, are doing fine pioneer work in caring for the poor at home.

Miss Keith spoke of the system of sending pupil nurses out during their hospital training to work in the district, and she remarked:—

"A few from each class show qualifications for district work, enter it with the right spirit, and carry an atmosphere into the homes they visit. The larger number are unpromising workers in this field of social service. They are not particularly anxious to come in close contact with filth and poverty, and they are not prepared to take a personal interest in those conditions. Hence they are not adapted for this branch of nursing, and when it is to them only a prescribed part of their training, their unfitness becomes a source of anxiety to the management, and the situations they create drain off energy that might be diverted into other channels of training-school work."

Miss Keith's concluding remarks make plain how much yet remains to be done in the States in district nursing efficiency. "We all want the sick poor well cared for when they cannot leave home,

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)