Some Thoughts on Reading

By MISS DELLA ADAMS

How many of us realize that we are among a chosen few when we consider the fact that we are able to enjoy a good book? How many of us think of the library as the best part of our home, either of the home we have, or of the ideal home we are to have after awhile? How many of us think of books as our friends? How many of us want to be sure we have the right kind of friends, even in books?

Someone has said, "It's in books that most of us learn how splendidly worth while life is." Yes, it is from books and from people. Sometimes, one is disappointed in people. Good books do not disappoint; they give food for thought.

Statistics given by Lyman Abbott show an interesting fact about readers. "Out of the 82,700,00 people in the United States ten years of age or over, there are 4.900,000 who can neither read nor write, and to whom all books are as nothing. Out of the 77,800,000 left, there are—we cannot be sure how many thousand—to whom the world of books is as deep a blankness as was the world of music to the woman who heard Josef Hoffman in concert, then said, 'If he's struck a tune yet, I ain't heard it.'"

How rare is our opportunity then, as students of a modern-day high school! For, are not many of us able both to read and to enjoy good books? Are we not able to gain valuable lessons from those books which deal with life problems? Considering our opportunity, are we going to leave the books in our libraries as ornaments, or shall we use them for enriching our minds?

The dream world of books which Ruth Cross pictures Molly as living in is a world that each of us should be glad to build for ourselves. I describe Molly in the words of Miss Cross: "These stories possessed her by night. Sometimes the people in the story did one thing, sometimes another. But a few basic scenes persisted. and these she told over and over to herself, like variations on a beautiful theme of music." Certainly, her mind was enriched immeasurably thereby.

Do you laugh with the characters of the book? Do you cry with them? Do you forget the quarrel you have just had with brother Sam as you read the thrilling adventures of Tom Sawyer? Do you imagine that you are the hero and, in the dream, forget that you had. today, the worst fuss you ever had with "that old teacher"? You should. You should laugh, cry, live, and die with your hero. It relieves your mind. In such relief, you find that the book is your friend, for, after all, a friend is simply a helper. Follow Michiavelli's example: "When evening has arrived, I return home and go into my study. For hours together the miseries of life no longer annoy me, I forget every vexation; I do not fear poverty; for I have altogether transferred myself to those with whom I hold converse."

The kind of books to be read disturbs some people. If the world were ideal, possibly "have saw" would never be said. Surely, in an ideal world, there could be no bad books. But as long as we have people, we will have no Utopia. Each person must judge. to the best of his ability and with the advice of more experienced people, what he should read. If he does this, benefit will come from the reading. Even here. there are differences of opinion, however. Jean de la Bruyere says, "Where a book raises your spirits and inspires you with noble and courageous feelings, seek for no other rule to judge the event by: It is good and made by a good workman," while Fielding believes: "We are as liable to be corrupted by books as by companions."

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