

# Mr. Mabie's Literary Talk to Girls



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"WHAT shall I read?" is a much more important question than "What shall I wear?" but it is to be feared that many girls think otherwise. It is just as much one's duty to be attractive as to be good, and dress and manners are of much greater importance than some people suppose.

We have not only to live in this world, but we have also to live with others. Half the pleasure of living comes from our relations with others: from the variety, interest, charm which they bring us. It is one of our best pieces of good fortune to live in a community in which the people are intelligent, well-dressed, courteous and interesting, and it is every one's duty to help make such a community by being intelligent, well dressed, courteous and interesting. The man

who thinks he is showing superior strength of character by being churlish simply reveals his ignorance.

The woman who discards taste in dress as an evidence of frivolity, and makes herself conspicuous by reason of the inappropriateness or ugliness of her dress, advertises her one-sided notion of a woman's place and work in society. To dress intelligently and attractively, so far as one's means will permit, is just as much a part of a rational and well-rounded life as to be truthful and honest. We owe to those who live with us the courtesy of being well dressed.

## Reading as a Means of Attraction

THERE is a sham Americanism which is ostentatiously slovenly as a sign of independence. No man or woman has any right to be independent at the expense of others; and independence never involves bad taste in dress or manners. Real Americanism is good sense, self-restraint and consideration for others. We cannot be too careful to treat one another with the utmost respect.

The instinct which makes a girl wish to be beautiful and attractive is healthful, and ought to be guided and enforced by education. The girl who does not care whether she is agreeable or not shows lack of good sense. But no girl ought to be satisfied with making a pleasant impression on the eye: she ought to be not only agreeable to look at but agreeable to talk with as well. Her voice ought to be low and modulated; she ought to have many kinds of interest, and she ought to have a cultivated mind. Charm of manner and of mind often wins in competition with beauty unaccompanied by cultivation; and it has the great advantage over beauty of increasing as the years go by.

## When a Woman's Beauty is Gone

BEAUTY often goes early in life, and there are few more pathetic figures than the women who have lost it and have nothing to put in its place. The wise girl lays up a store of attractions against the time when those with which she started may be lost, and there is no better way of making one's self an agreeable companion for others and for one's self than by constant reading of good books. One of the finest compliments ever paid a woman was the remark of an eminent man concerning a well-known woman of his time, that to know her was a liberal education. No woman can have the quality of mind which makes association with her not only delightful, but stimulating and educational, unless she is well read; and the well-read woman must read constantly and with intelligence.

## No Sex in Literature

MEN and women have the same interests in life and ought to read the same books. The time has long gone by when certain very conventional and didactic, goody-goody books were set apart for the "edification of the female mind." There is no sex so far as the great experiences of life are concerned, and the greatest books are those

which deal with these experiences. Many of these books were written for men in the days before women read as a class, but they belong as much to women as to men, and no girl can afford to remain ignorant of them.

## Shakespeare's Plays Performed Without Women

NO WOMAN appeared in any play of Shakespeare's until many years after his death, and these plays were presented at audiences made up largely of men; but to-day it is probable that, in this country at least, more women than men are studying the plays, and the finest traditions of Shakespearean acting have to do as much with great actresses as with great actors. Formerly books were not only written for men but by men; now they are written by women in increasing numbers, and any list of the foremost writers of the nineteenth century must contain the names of Jane Austen, George Eliot, George Sand, Mrs. Browning, Madame de Staël, and other notable women. In American fiction especially women have done an increasing amount of original work with a high degree of skill and ability. There is no division of literature along sex lines, and no large group of books which women ought to read simply because they are women.

examples of books which some boys read with pleasure, but which belong especially to girls. The value of a book depends largely on the readiness of the reader to understand it, and books which are put into the hands of children ought to be carefully selected with reference to their adaptability to the mind of the child at that particular period. There are, for this reason, certain books which younger girls ought to know at the right time.

## Books Designed for Older Girls

FOR the same reason there are certain books with which older girls ought to be familiar: books which deal primarily with the experiences of such girls, or which present types of womanhood which every girl ought to recognize and honor. There are certain beautiful or noble or tragical women in literature whom every girl ought to know; among them Homer's Helen and Penelope; Dante's Beatrice; Shakespeare's Rosalind, Perdita, Imogen and Cordelia; Scott's Rebecca; Dickens's Agnes Copperfield; Thackeray's Becky Sharp, Helen Pendennis and Ethel Newcome; Balzac's Eugénie Grandet; Tennyson's Enid; Browning's Pippa and Pompilia. Prose and poetry are rich in the figures of women who embody the highest qualities of womanhood, or who have passed through its deepest experiences and been moulded by them into noble or ignoble forms. To know these typical women whose names are in the memory of all men is no small part of a woman's education, and that knowledge can be gained only by familiarity with the best literature. To these names must be added the names of those women who have moved on a great stage or who have lived tragic lives in history. This means that the girl who wishes to understand herself must read widely and wisely, for it is only as we become familiar with the rich experience that comes to those who touch life on many sides that we come to understand the possibilities of our own natures.

## A Book of the Quiet Life

TO THE books of the Quiet Life a new volume has been added by the translation of a group of Professor Carl Hilty's essays under the title "Happiness." The author is a Swiss; studied at four universities in Germany, England and France; became a

teacher by profession, and has long held an important professorship in the University of Bern. He has been a member of the Swiss House of Representatives, and has held the distinguished position of Rector of the University with which he is associated. He has contributed to contemporary literature a number of important studies on philosophical and political subjects; and has given the world, from time to time during the past ten years, the ripe fruit of his inner life in a series of small books, of the first of which Professor Peabody, of Harvard University, has made an admirable translation. The chapters which make up this volume are devoted to such topics as "The Art of Work," "Good Habits," "How to Fight the Battles of Life," "The Art of Having Time," "The Meaning of Life," and "Happiness." It will be seen, therefore, that this scholar and thinker deals with some of the problems which are presented to us all; and the scope of his interests at once suggests that he brings wide knowledge of life to bear on these most perplexing and fundamental matters.

Professor Hilty writes with perfect simplicity about the profoundest matters, and his clear, unerring good sense and practical judgment are on every page. "Happiness" is a book which should be read by those who are making undue haste to be rich, who are loading themselves with material things, who are rushing hither and thither in a vain pursuit of rest; it is a manual of intellectual peace, of spiritual growth, of sound habits and of fruitful living.



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## BOOKS FOR GIRLS

It is hoped that this list will be read in connection with the accompanying comments. It is not intended to do more than suggest the kind and quality of book which young girls will find profitable, and it includes only such books as the girls of to-day are reading with interest.

### FOR YOUNGER GIRLS

Miss Alcott's "Little Women"  
" " "An Old-Fashioned Girl"  
Lamb's "Tales from Shakespeare"  
Kingsley's "Greek Heroes"  
" " "The Water Babies"

Carroll's "Alice in Wonderland"  
" " "Through the Looking-Glass"  
Macdonald's "The Princess and Curdie"  
" " "At the Back of the North Wind"

### FOR OLDER GIRLS

"Modern Readers' Bible"  
Tennyson's "Idylls of the King"  
Longfellow's "Evangeline"  
" " "Voices of the Night"  
" " "Hiawatha"  
Scott's Novels  
Dickens's Novels  
Jane Austen's Novels  
Hawthorne's "The Marble Faun"  
" " "The House of the Seven Gables"  
George Eliot's "Silas Marner"

Mr. Howells's "The Lady of the Aroostook"  
" " "A Chance Acquaintance"  
" " "Their Wedding Journey"  
Miss Jewett's "A White Heron and Other Stories"  
Black's "A Princess of Thule"  
Kingsley's "Westward Ho!"  
Miss Mulock's "John Halifax, Gentleman"  
Blackmore's "Lorna Doone"  
Stevenson's "Travels with a Donkey"  
Thackeray's "The Newcomes"  
Mrs. Jameson's "Shakespeare's Heroines"

## Books Especially Adapted to Young Girls

THERE are, however, books which are especially adapted to young girls because they deal chiefly with experiences which belong to girlhood and which every girl understands. There are girls' books as there are boys' books, because the occupations and interests of boys and girls are widely different. When these different kinds of interest are presented in the right way they are of great value. "Two Years Before the Mast" and "Treasure Island" are examples of books which many girls enjoy, but which appeal directly and in a more intimate way to boys. "Little Women" and "Alice in Wonderland," on the other hand, are



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