

New Series.]

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QUESTIONS FOR GIRLS.

BY JOSEPHINE POLLARD.

WHAT DO YOU READ ?

THE books we read tend largely to the formation of our characters. Good books (and by good I do not necessarily mean those that are stupid and uninteresting) are to the mind what good food is to the body; they strengthen and improve its tone, put right thoughts into exercise, and

cultivate noble desires. No one expects much from the mind that is satisfied with the lowest kind of literature; and an inveterate reader of romances has no aptitude for the practical duties of life.

There is Fanny Furbelow, who feels a deep interest in every new fashion plate, and consults all the oracles for becoming styles in dress-making and millinery. The adorning of her person is far more important to her than the adorning of her mind; and a story with a moral would be the most stupid entertainment in the world.

She thinks, or rather pretends to think, religious papers were only intended as moral horse-shoes to keep the witches away, and the idea of opening one for the sake of reading its contents never enters

her silly little head. She prefers husks to nourishing food; and would much rather sit down to a feast presided over by the Queen of Fashion, than to a banquet provided by the King of kings.

More than half of this is the effect of a silly pride. Fanny wishes to be considered odd, eccentric, and peculiar — a sort of anomaly, in fact; and whatever other young girls are expected to do, she persistently ignores. She is not like any other girl, and she is anxious to keep that idea before the public. She devours novels, and has so “Frenchified” her taste that nothing but the most highly seasoned and wickedly spiced literature offers her the least particle of enjoyment. Anything founded on fact is “all stuff and nonsense,” even the adventures of celebrated travelers

being tame in comparison with those of the fictitious Count Fricandean, or Madame Rataplan.

Home is distasteful to her; her circumstances are not such as she desires; and as she finds, in the books she reads, no hints nor suggestions that would tend to educate or improve her mind, or give a wholesome direction to her thoughts, she feels herself to be the sport of fortune and dreams how different things might be.

Different indeed if her heart or her hands were prompt to give assistance; but her eyes are so dazzled by the gorgeous tales she reads that they cannot see clearly the things that lie close at hand. The distant and unreal splendors charm her so that she has no relish for every day affairs, and her temper becomes so morose and

irritable that there is really no comfort to be taken in her society.

She thinks she is happy, but she is far from it. The satisfaction derived from unwholesome food is short-lived and uncertain. The realities of life are far more important than its frivolities, and the mind that is not properly nourished loses its activity and usefulness.

Henry Harmon is another sample. Henry had always fancied he would like to become a sailor. "A life on the ocean wave" was the kind of existence he coveted, and he was fond of being with seafaring people. The books he read were those that painted in glowing words the fascinations of the deep blue sea, and carefully avoided any allusions to its perils or privations.

It was not long before he had an opportunity of putting his seamanship to the test, and a very brief experience soon satisfied him that the ocean was not all his fancy had painted. He had no practical knowledge whatever of a sailor's duties, no idea of the hardships they involved, and he realized how little good he had derived from the books in which he had been most interested.

We are sailing on the stream of time bound for the port of Paradise. Our voyage is through straits and channels, around capes and promontories; we are in danger of rocks and whirlpools, and we know not how soon death may overtake us. We need a pilot, a chart, and a compass; and these God offers us in the shape of Christ, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit.

Grace in the cabin makes grace on deck. The strength and courage we receive from contact with good books and good people will help us over many a difficulty that besets our path. The desire for good things grows by what it feeds on, and fashion magazines or fourth rate novels will never teach us how to adorn ourselves with those jewels that moth and rust never corrupt, or fit us to live good and noble lives. Cultivate a taste for good reading while young. Have your favorite authors, and let them be noted for purity of style more than for brilliancy, for the former does its work upon the heart, while the latter only serves for a moment to illuminate the intellect.

“Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life:” [that is, the kingdom of heaven begins in the soul;]

“and they are they which testify of me.”
“Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein; for the time is at hand.” Is your reading profitable to you in any way?

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TRACT DEPARTMENT.

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