

Works are the quintessence of a mind, and are therefore always of by far greater value than conversation, even if it be the conversation of the greatest mind. In every essential a man's works surpass his conversation and leave it far behind. Even the writings of an ordinary man may be instructive, worth reading, and entertaining, for the simple reason that they are the quintessence of that man's mind--that is to say, the writings are the result and fruit of his whole thought and study; while we should be dissatisfied with his conversation. Accordingly, it is possible to read books written by people whose conversation would give us no satisfaction; so that the mind will only by degrees attain high culture by finding entertainment almost entirely in books, and not in men.

There is nothing that so greatly recreates the mind as the works of the old classic writers. Directly one has been taken up, even if it is only for half-an-hour, one feels as quickly refreshed, relieved, purified, elevated, and strengthened as if one had refreshed oneself at a mountain stream. Is this due to the perfections of the old languages, or to the greatness of the minds whose works have remained unharmed and untouched for centuries? Perhaps to both combined. This I know, directly we stop learning the old languages (as is at present threatening) a new class of literature will spring up, consisting of writing that is more barbaric, stupid, and worthless than has ever yet existed; that, in particular, the German language, which possesses some of the beauties of the old languages, will be systematically spoilt and stripped by these worthless contemporary scribblers, until, little by little, it becomes

impoverished, crippled, and reduced to a miserable jargon.