

# THE ROMANCE OF READING

*Stephen Baily*

For thrills some go up in balloons  
Or spy on gibbering baboons  
Or plummet down Niagara Falls  
In wooden barrels, which takes balls.  
I'm different. When existence palls—  
When time drags and adventure calls—  
I pass up options apt to end in bleeding  
In favor of the library and reading.

What makes my pulses race about  
The books the library lends out  
Is that you never know what you  
Will find when you are leafing through  
Them. I don't mean unorthodox  
Ideas that deliver shocks  
To smugness. What I have in mind  
Are phrases boldly underlined  
By cowards never to be met;  
Or ashes that a cigarette  
Has shed to be smashed into smudges;  
Or comments left by cranks with grudges  
Against society;  
Plus a variety  
Of stains. I can't help being flustered  
By so much coffee, wine and mustard—  
Not to say flabbergasted by  
Blots that I can't identify  
But that bear a strong likeness to  
The tints of numbers one and two.

Your daily rounds have lost their zest?  
Go on then—climb Mount Everest  
And stand amazed six miles above  
The dust. Not me—when I'm tired of  
My life—when it lacks spice or sugar—  
A confrontation with a booger  
Appended to a page is all I need  
To get my sense of awe back up to speed.

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