

“leads on to fortune,” to independence, to honour, to happiness, and mayhap to immortal fame? I assert it is knowledge. To use the words of an eloquent writer and a great orator: “Knowledge is like the mystic ladder in the patriarch’s dream; its base rests on the primeval earth, its crest is lost in the shadowy splendour of the empyrean, while the great authors who for traditionary ages have held the chain of science and philosophy, of poesy and erudition, are the angels ascending and descending the sacred scale, and maintaining, as it were, the communication between man and heaven.” \* How noble and how apt is the simile! and how clearly does it demonstrate to us that it is our duty as well as our interest, to keep up by every means this communication; for when the great Creator of unnumbered worlds breathed into us the breath of life, and made us partakers of his own divine essence, by bestowing on us a soul, he not only implanted in our breast that thirst for knowledge which all men possess more or less, but he also supplied to us the means of satisfying that innate desire. Shall we then refuse to drink from those pure springs which the providence of God, and the intelligence of man, have alike provided for us? or shall we, forgetful of Danté’s words,—

Nessun maggior dolore che ricordarsi del tempo felice,  
Nella miseria,†

by passing a youth of ignorance and idleness, prepare for ourselves an old age of useless regret and of unavailing remorse? It has been well said, “The youth of a nation are the trustees of posterity.” What important duties does this trust entail upon us? By it we are bound to use to the uttermost our humble efforts to raise higher and higher the standard of intellectual culture in this great country—to watch over the interests of learning, and to advance, as far as in us lies, the progress of education. I say “advance,” for in the acquisition of knowledge there is no middle course—no “*juste milieu*,” one must either go forward or go back—

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\* Right Hon. B. D’Israeli.

† No bitterer pang can mortal bosom know,  
Than joy remembered in the midst of woe.