

accurate habits of thought, highly to be desired. But the greatest benefit of all that I can derive—for self development—the unfolding of my power, the awakening of feeling and the quickness of thought within me, will be from the text itself—will be from bringing my mind into contact with the mind of genius, rather than with the frigidities of critics, commentators and compilers. And bringing our minds in contact with genius, keeping close to it—its very self—and not to its husk—the greatness of thought, the generosity of sentiment, the fineness of feeling, which are attributes of genius, will, under the combined influence of the open and receptive admiration with which a modest man listens to a great man, and of the penetrative power with which it is the prerogative of genius to speak—will sink into, and spread their leaven through our minds. And this, this is the very pith and marrow of Education—the first step in, as it is the last result of, mental culture. The enlarging of our minds—not the cramming of our memories, but the expansion of our faculties—the enlarging of our sympathies, the elevating and strengthening of our thoughts and our power of thinking, the purifying of our feelings, the widening, and deepening of our capacity to feel, the investing our moral sensitiveness with its right discriminating touch, so that, feeling quickly and feeling deeply, we feel moreover as we ought to feel—this is the grand result of Education.

And for the production of this, there is nothing like pondering and poring upon the bare text of a great writer, till we have assimilated his thought and made it a part of our intellectual system, and so bringing our mind close to his. And, though studying in this fashion we may make mistakes which notes and explanations, teachers and professors might have enabled us to avoid—and though we may miss much, yet (unless we are making criticism our profession, unless professional knowledge is our object, which alters the case) yet the incompleteness of our critical knowledge is amply compensated by the improved tone, the magnetically communicated power of our minds, consequent upon the manner in which we have acquired what we do know.