

4
does not matter, says Seneca, how many, but how good books you have. When, therefore, you meet with a good book, treat it as you would a good friend; let it be your frequent companion. Cecil did so, and devoted a shelf for what he called his tried books. This shelf should be the best sought in your library. Faithfully read, they will afford you more satisfaction and profit than were you to skim over thousands of volumes, perused hurriedly and unreflectingly. The poet's well-known recommendation, to "drink deep or taste not the Pierian spring," assumes perhaps increased significance in our day, the great passion of which seems to be to acquire knowledge without labor. Self-deceiving, men will be unmindful that uncompromising effort and patient toil are inseparable conditions of all excellence, and that this first law of our constitution is irresistible. Eschew, then, that mere glancing at periodicals and superficial reading of popular works, that never yet fastened the bays and laurels around the student's brow. Follow the contrary course, and seek wisdom for herself alone. The pleasures she bestows never terminate in a sigh; and though she be usually grave, yet does she not always exclude the sportiveness of wit, though she may condemn its unbridled license and malignity. You will also require her as a lamp for your guidance in other directions. The literature of the present day exhibits, perhaps more than ever before, a tendency to question opinions however established by the lapse of ages; to overturn every thing, no matter how sacred it be deemed, that cannot be immediately squared with the views of hasty objectors. Now if stagnation be opposed, as it undoubtedly is, to that universal law which secures both mental and physical development, its reverse quality, activity, must, evidently, be good and proper. Yet, when you see this activity perverted into wrong channels, and elevated ignorance and presumption run-a-muck at those great fundamental truths which the whole civilized world avouches, it were well to reflect whether by the hasty and inconsiderate removal of the old land marks, there is not danger of falling into an abyss of utter confusion and darkness. At the same time, it were well to bethink you that each and all of you have fitting and legitimate guides to open your eyes to the danger, and to warn you from it. And you will evince at once the goodness of your heart and the wisdom of your head by ever exhibiting that respect for the teachers of religion, of whatsoever name they be, which their sacred vocation demands.

That thoroughness of study and acquirement to which I have just referred as opposed to superficiality, would imply that to excel, it were