

creation of political circumstances, yet we may observe that it usually appears synchronously with great political events. It was during the Persian and Peloponnesian wars that the everlasting monuments of the Grecian muse was produced; and it was while the fierce wars excited by religion against modern Europe, that the most noble works of poetic genius appeared in Italy, Spain and England. So also the first band of Roman poets were co-existent with the Punic wars; and the second and more glorious, though perhaps less vigorous display of Italian genius, rose amid the calamities of the civil wars." Arabic literature flourished during the Saracenic conquests, but has ever since declined; and Chinese literature, together with that of most eastern nations, is evidently a legacy handed down from more enterprising times—its present possessors not being able to make any improvement, nor even to maintain the original trust unimpaired.

Learning is a commodity which the ignorant and the idle do not want, and whatever may be the facilities for its attainment, such persons cannot be successfully persuaded to seek it. They have other and more congenial pursuits, requiring less of the mind, and answering better the purposes of immediate gratification. Schools have rendered literature more accessible, but they have added nothing to the force of those convictions on which enterprise depends, and hence are to be reckoned only as an arrangement of secondary character—as a dictate of invincible purpose. It is from this purpose, which can always command the means for its own accomplishment, that literature emanates, and not from our halls of learning. A cause which thus produces at once both science and its facilities, is surely equal to self-education.

7. *Successful examples of self-educated men.* Had it ever been so impossible in theory to trace the cause of education to any other source than that of scholastic institutions, still the numberless examples of self-education would have effectually contradicted such a conclusion.

Both in ancient and modern times a very large proportion of distinguished names are found to have risen to eminence by their own unaided exertions, and often in spite of yet greater disadvantages from positive opposition. It

cannot be expected that from a list so extensive we should select more than a few instances on the present occasion; and these will be taken from the moderns, as their history is best known.

Shakespeare, who stands confessedly at the head of dramatic literature, and who is one of the boldest, most profound, and most correct writers of any age, was altogether his own instructor. It is true that the events of his early life are not well known; but enough is known to render it certain that the elevated conceptions and inimitable style which have immortalized his writings were not the gift of academic shades nor of pedagogic toil.

Pope ranks high in the first class of original poets, and is justly acknowledged to be first among the translators of poetry. But he assumed from choice, not necessity, the responsibility of educating himself: a task well executed, if enduring fame may be taken as the measure of success. Dr Johnson thus alludes to the subject: "Pope finding little advantage from external help, resolved thenceforward to direct himself; and at twelve formed a plan of study which he completed with little other incitement than the desire of excellence."

Thomas Simpson, one of the ablest mathematicians that Europe has produced, and the author of several valuable treatises, was entirely self-taught.

Defoe, whose name is familiar to most readers by his unrivalled tale of Robinson Crusoe, was an extensive and elegant writer, but independent of scholastic training.

Sir William Herschel contributed more than any other modern astronomer to that department of science, although he was from first to last his own teacher, and the maker of his telescopes.

Sir Humphrey Davy not only mastered the science of chemistry without assistance, but extended his researches until important additions were made to that department of knowledge.

Dr Franklin's eminence as a statesman and a philosopher is as little questionable as the fact of his being entirely self-educated.

Dr John Mason Good was a scholar of the highest order in almost every department of science; in medicine, in natural science, in classical and in oriental literature.

Another of similar acquirements, ex-