

his great gift because he cannot help doing so; the lesser exercises, or ought to exercise, his small talent because he really likes to; but he who works at art, or literature, or science, with conscious effort and as a duty, is on a wrong track altogether, even though all the guideposts he has consulted on his journey may have agreed in directing him thither.

The view that such industry is in itself commendable has, I imagine, gained its vogue chiefly in consequence of the practice and preaching of various gloomy, earnest, and dissatisfied mortals who, finding life a burdensome business, addicted themselves to hard, intellectual labour as, on the whole, a safer and more effective narcotic than society or strong drink. Possibly it is, but I think its uses have been unduly advocated. Carlyle is responsible for a good deal of the modern misconception on the subject in this country, though it must in fairness be added that the misconception is often due to his interpreters rather than to himself; and Zola is a flagrant instance of one who deified work for its own sake without any discrimination. The doctrine, being presented to the public in a serious and insistent fashion, has naturally got itself widely accepted and has done an immense amount of mischief; so that nowadays any indefatigable wretch who wishes to make a name for himself in the intellectual world sets about the business with a positive sense of virtue, and actually supposes himself a public benefactor when he employs other people about his trumpery. This is, of course, a quite unwarrantable assumption. If the resultant work be, as it very frequently is, merely a laborious compilation of insignificant facts or the exposition of worthless theories or a presentment of unwholesome imaginings, its production is as much an economical iniquity as any extravagance of luxury. The first thing, then, that a sane system of education has to recognize is that industry of this nature may do more harm than good; and along with the fallacy of work for work's sake it must rid itself of the twin fallacy of information for information's sake. I now propose—solely, of course, for the pleasure of the thing—to state my views, very briefly and gently, on that subject.