

mory in retaining it, yet, after all, there may be no strength of mind, and no judgment to render the knowledge useful. Education in mental culture, on the contrary, is the "bracing of the powers of thinking, and hence of reasoning from the facts, because powerful thought is the basis of powerful argument." Aim, then, in all the efforts you make at the improvement (the growing improvement) of your understanding—endeavor to tone every individual faculty of your nature, and to unite all in beautiful harmony, for union is strength in this as in every other cause, control the imagination by a well-matured judgment, and kindle into warmth the more sober deductions and logic of the understanding by the fervor of genius.

2nd. It will be requisite and wise for you distinctly to understand what is the tendency of your mind; or, in other words, on what department of study you are likely to excel. History is presenting its claim on your attention in its fascinating pages. Philosophy, too, is arguing itself with its wandering array of topics of thought; the physical sciences in their boundless variety of subjects of interesting association. *Geology* explaining the monuments of time and worlds amongst the caverns of the earth. Chemistry analysing the incessant processes of nature; mechanics determining the movement of the insect's limb, and of that mightiest wonder and greatest creation of modern times, the "Steam Engine." Astronomy sweeping on its wide and glorious glance, the arch of heaven itself. All these are claiming your attention, but your time is necessarily limited by your occupation. The range of your thoughts is thus circumscribed, and by those limitations you are precluded from the investigation of *all* subjects; hence the real necessity of choosing *one*, and hence, if that choice be made at random, the danger of wasting your powers. You may find out when too late, that you have no aptitude for the subject you have selected, and the unsuccessfulness of your pursuit may damp your ardor in another track. Endeavor, then by experiment, to ascertain what is the bent of your understanding, and select some subject congenial to it, and thus, while you are apparently fostering a predilection for one order of facts and thoughts, as some would say, weakening the mind's power by that exclusive fostering, you indeed impart to it new strength for the investigation of others.

3rdly. Not only is it necessary for the successful prosecution of mental culture to understand the bent of the understanding, and to choose a subject in accordance with it, "*but also to ascertain the weak points of your mind.*" Some are

excessively sanguine, thinking they have fathomed the abyss of a subject, when they are only skimming the surface—and neglect the severe and slow elaborations of thought by which truth is reached. Others again have no concentration; their minds are dissipated by the variety of subjects over which they travel, and on the constant change from point to point—they lose much of their force; others have not mental decision—they know not when, and cannot muster resolution to begin a course of study, and when they have begun are easily diverted from it. Other minds have no opinion of their own reflection, but the sentiments of others—to avoid then the weakness, the folly, and the pain of any of these mental states—ascertain in which of these points your minds are infirm; if in any, struggle against it with all your might when ascertained, and attempt to impart time and firmness by discipline on these points, which hitherto have been the sources of your weakness and drawbacks on your improvement.

4thly. Your next step, after a consideration of these *mental guards*, and the choice of a subject, is the manner for pursuing the course of the study you adopt—the means are innumerable; never in this world's history were there so many or such great facilities for acquiring knowledge as at the present time; literary societies and cheap publications are among the wonders of our wonderful age. We would, however, in accordance with our plan, point out a few of the leading ones, with directions for their proper and successful employment. Among these, "Reading" is the most prominent. Your first consideration is to what books you should read. Of course select those that bear directly on the study of the subject you have adopted; select some standard work on the subject in preference to any other, for while we would not underrate the periodical literature of the day, we would advise you, as your time in mental culture is so precious, to peruse some work bearing directly on the subject—to the "Magazine" or the "Review," in which, however well and ably written, will tend from their necessary conciseness to give you but a superficial view of your subject. With regard to "novels" and works of "fiction," we trust your desire for solid knowledge will be a sufficient guard; they but dilute history and present exaggerated views of men and things, and will, if frequently perused, unfit the mind for sober thinking, and habituate the feelings to an artificial and heated atmosphere of excitement. Nothing, in fine, can be more preposterous in principle, and more incompatible with fact, than that novel reading can in any