

Experience shews us that ideas are more deeply imprinted on the memory, by frequent repetition—by reviving the images in the mind frequently, whether by reflection or conversation. What we wish to retain, we should, therefore, *often revolve in our minds, and converse upon, with, some sensible, companion.* Literary Societies, upon a good plan, and well conducted, might be of infinite advantage in this respect. Besides the new information which might by this means be collected, they might be rendered schools for the improvement of the memory; both by habituating a person to collect and methodize his own ideas, and also to exert the utmost power of his faculties to comprehend and retain those of others, in the course of familiar and friendly debate.

In our endeavours to improve the mind, we are also obliged to pay some regard to *the influence which it may receive from the body.* That the memory, as well as all our mental faculties, is liable to be in some degree affected by the body, there cannot be a doubt; though it would be very difficult to say in what way that latent influence operates. Aristotle, an ingenious and indefatigable enquirer into the secrets of nature, was of opinion that any disproportion of body is injurious to the faculty of memory; and particularly that dwarfs, and such persons as have the higher parts of their bodies larger in proportion than the lower, are always found to be defective in this respect. Whether there be, in nature, any real foundation for such opinion, I cannot pretend to say; but am rather inclined to think that neither this nor any other faculty of the mind is influenced so much by the figure of the body, as by the quality of the humours and state of the nerves. In a relaxed state of the nerves, we may frequently find the powers of the mind impaired; and by the too free use of spiritous liquours, which heat the blood and stimulate the system, we find not only a temporary loss of memory produced, but also a gradual and irreparable decay of the faculty. Though we know not, therefore, in what manner the corporeal frame acts upon the mental faculties, yet from experience we learn, that the best state of the one is most favourable to the perfection of the other—that the memory and other powers of the mind, as far as they depend upon corporeal influence, are best improved by temperance, exercise, a regular manner of life, and whatever else contributes to the health and natural state of the body. He who studies the improvement of his mind, ought therefore to *lead a sober and regular life—to be temperate both in eating and drinking—not to indulge himself in too much sleep, nor in any other vicious or indolent habit.*

In the plan of this essay, which I had formed in my mind, before I sat down to write it, I had included some account of the art of *artificial memory*, together with some more particular directions concerning the method of reading history; and the whole was to be comprised in less space than I have already filled. But, like a traveller in a mountainous country, new prospects unexpectedly opened upon me in my progress, and I find I cannot at present compass the whole of my design. But if what I have now written should prove acceptable to any of your young readers, and you should be inclined to favour me with your indulgence, you may perhaps hear again from,

QUEBEC, 14th Dec. 1792,

A FRIEND OF YOUTH.

† Arist. de mem. et Rem. C. III.

*Analyse*