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“I could wish,” says Montaigne, in an essay on the Education of Children, “I could wish that we could learn to ride, handle a pike, touch a lute, or sing, without the trouble of practice, as these (the teachers of the day) attempt to make us judge and speak well, without exercising us in judging and speaking.” All our learning, all our instructions, are valuable in proportion as they develop the capacity to judge and to speak. To judge, that is, to think, is not to recall distinct facts, or series of facts, the mind may have acquired, but it is the power of reviewing these facts, and, from these views, of forming new combinations which may themselves become facts. The further perfecting of the mind, the triumph of the intellect, is the power to embody these thoughts in fitting words, and this last is perhaps the more difficult, or at any rate the more unsatisfactory, of the two, because, as some writer says, words fall far short of thought, and are at best very imperfect reflections of the mind’s images. Thought and language are the great business of the intellect, and as often reveal its degree of perfectness in an ordinary remark as in the most abstruse treatise, for the habits of thought we have been forming all our lives, tell plainly to the attentive ear the tale of the intellect’s occupation. But teachability of mind, like flexibility of muscle, requires a long apprenticeship. The Spartan with whom physical strength was paramount, took the child from the

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