

preternatural faculty; and I think it may admit of a doubt whether it was ever found united with a good understanding.

That which we more properly call memory, requires a clear and distinct perception of some ideas communicated to the mind. With the generality of men the sounds of a language which they do not understand, are almost instantly forgotten; and even when we know the language, if we do not understand the subject, we commonly retain but little of it. Such persons as can retain the mere sounds or articulation, without the correspondent ideas, would seem to be endowed with a sense of which mankind in general are destitute; perhaps something like that by which we remember a series of musical notes, a faculty of which we find various kinds of animals possessed as well as men. But to promote useful and distinct remembrance, a clear preception of ideas and comprehension of the subject is indispensibly requisite. It ought therefore to be the first care of him who wishes to retain any thing in memory, *that he acquire a full understanding of it.* In the education of children, it may perhaps be expedient, in some instances, to depart from this rule, but it should certainly be as rarely as possible. That which they do not understand is committed to memory with great labour, and generally soon forgotten,

After fully understanding the subject, the principal means by which it is fixed in the mind, are the *pain* or *pleasure*, with which it affects us: A lively sensibility of mind is, therefore, essential to a good memory. That which we read or hear with indifference, will leave but a slight impression upon the mind, and will of course be soon forgotten: but that which we are interested in, or which, in any way, very deeply affects us, will generally remain with us. If our studies be aided by strong curiosity, sensibility of heart, cheerfulness of temper, joy, hope, emulation, and other agreeable and lively passions, what we read or study will be remembered with the greatest ease. By these means, the memory will improve, without our ever thinking of it, or being at all anxious about it.

I am apt to believe that too great solicitude to retain ideas in the mind, may frequently defeat its own purpose, in the same manner as solicitude and impatience to fall asleep may be the means of keeping us awake. Not that I suppose any affinity between sleep and memory; but as solicitude, in the one case, prevents the composure of the mind, so in the other, it diverts the attention from its proper object, and in both cases produces the evil which it is most anxious to avoid. We ought never (if I may so express myself) to be in a hurry to remember any thing. All kind of hurry or impatience is apt to produce a fluctuation and confusion of ideas, totally destructive of distinct remembrance. Neither ought we to harass the mind, by too laborious an application to study. This also will defeat its own purpose. The mind is like the body in this respect, that though it requires exercise to keep its powers in proper health and vigour, yet that exercise must not be too violent. It must not be burdened with tasks which fatigue it, nor bewildered with a great variety of objects together, or in too close succession.

We may take it for an invariable maxim, that what is learned with *pleasure*, is always best and easiest learned. Though pain be one of the means by which images may be impressed upon the mind, it ought in education, to be resorted to as seldom as possible, because the ideas acquired in this way, are seldom found but associated with a degree of aversion and disgust.