

Education of the young.

The Intellectual education of the young, or the cultivation of their understanding, is to impress them with right views of things, and to accustom them to such a manner of thinking and judging, as is in accordance with truth, and by which they may become wise. Man is equally able to bring under the cognizance and discrimination of his understanding, both the peculiar and individual productions of his own mind, and those diversified and extraneous subjects of observation which come within the scope of his mental or physical perceptions; he can subject the nature of these things to the decision of his judgment. He can bring them together, or separate them from accidental union; and by comparing them with each other, may conceive from them new ideas, which may thus be increased by endless alternation. His nature is not so constructed, as render it necessary that he should contemplate those things which he may learn, as they actually are; or that in the opinion which he may form of them, in the comparisons which he may institute therewith, or in the harmony or discord which he may observe between them, he may not be liable to error. He can contemplate all that surrounds him, from many or from one side only; he can consider it greater, or less, better or worse, more useful or more hurtful than it really is. He can combine things which have no affinity to each other; he can separate those that are bound together in the ties of indissoluble union; he can consider a thing as the effect or cause of another with which it has not the least connection; and the less that he exercises his intellectual powers, or the more negligently and carelessly he employs them, just so much more frequently will he fall into these errors of thought, judgment and resolution.

How much benefit, then, must he not receive, if, at the time when he begins to exert his intellectual powers, he should be so directed in their application, as to learn to employ them in the best and most correct manner! Such an object is the design and aim of the intellectual education of the young. They have need of a prudent and experienced guide on that road that leads to knowledge and truth—one who shall not only warn them against all by-paths, and bring them back therefrom as often as they wander thither, but who shall also learn them to shun all the inlets and mazes of error, and to pursue their aim without turning to the right hand or the left. Their understanding must not only be brought into action and enriched by many sciences, but it also must be so exercised, as that by degrees they shall acquire a promptness and facility in investigating and judging whatever they wish to learn, in discriminating easily between truth and error, and in following the surest rules and the shortest way in such an investigation and judgment.

But this cannot be so well accomplished by learning them, or impressing upon their memories those rules of thinking, as by learning them to observe, on all occasions, whether or wherein they have thought or judged correctly or incorrectly; by socially conversing, calculating, investigating, doubting or deciding with them upon some one of their own former methods of thinking and deciding.

They may thus be learnt to become observing and attentive to the progress of their own mind, and so become acquainted with the principles and rules by which it operates; learning, by their own experience, the obstructions which impede its operations, and the advantages that facilitate them.

Never too Old to Learn.

Socrates, at an extreme old age, learned to play on musical instruments. This would look ridiculous for some of the rich old men in our city, especially if they should take it into their heads to thrum a guitar under a lady's window, which Socrates did not do, but only learned to play upon some instrument of his time—not a guitar—for the purpose of resisting the wear and tear of old age.

Cato, at eighty years of age, thought proper to learn the Greek language. Many of our young men, at thirty and forty, have forgotten even the alphabet of a language, the knowledge of which was necessary to enter college. A fine comment upon their love of letters, truly!

Plutarch, when between seventy and eighty, commenced the study of the Latin. Many of our young lawyers, not thirty years of age, think that *nisi prius, scire facias, &c.*, are English expressions; and if you tell them that a knowledge of Latin would make them appear a little more respectable in their profession, they will reply that they are *too old* to think of learning Latin.

Boccaccio, was thirty-five years of age when he commenced his studies in polite literature. Yet he became one of the three great masters of the Tuscan dialect, Dante and Petrarch being the other two. There are many among us ten years younger than a Boccaccio, who are dying of *emul*, and regret that they were not educated to a taste for literature; but now they are *too old*.

Sir Henry Spelman neglected the sciences in his youth, but commenced the study of them when he was between fifty and sixty years of age. After this time he became a most learned antiquarian and lawyer. Our young men begin to think of laying their seniors on the shelf when they have reached sixty years of age. How different the present estimate put upon experience from that which characterized a certain period of the Grecian republic, when a man was not allowed to open his mouth in discourses or political meetings, who was under forty years of age.

Colbert, the famous French Minister, at sixty years of age returned to his Latin and law studies. How many of our college learnt men have ever looked into their classics since their graduation?

Dr. Johnson applied himself to the Dutch Language but a few years before his death. Most of our merchants and lawyers of twenty-five, thirty, and forty years of age, are obliged to apply to a teacher to translate a business letter written in the French language, which might be learned in a tenth part of the time required for the acquisition of the Dutch; and all because they are *too old to learn*.

Ludovica Monaldesco, at the great age of one hundred and fifteen, wrote the memoirs of his own times. A singular exertion, noticed by Voltaire, who was himself one of the most remarkable instances of the progress of age in new studies.

Ogilby, the translator of Homer and Virgil, was unacquainted with Latin and Greek till he was past fifty.

Franklin did not fully commence his philosophical pursuits till he had reached his fiftieth year. How many among us of thirty, forty, and fifty, who read nothing but newspapers for the want of a taste for natural philosophy! But they are *too old to learn*.

Accorso, a great lawyer, being asked why he began the study of law so late, answered that indeed he began it late, but he should therefore master it the sooner. This agrees with our theory, that healthy old age gives a man the power of accomplishing a difficult study in much less time than would be necessary to one of half his years.

Dryden, in his sixty-eighth year, commenced the translation of the Iliad; and his most pleasing productions were written in his old age.

We could go on and cite thousands of examples of men who commenced a new study and struck out into an entirely new pursuit, either for livelihood or amusement, at an advanced age. But every one familiar with the biography of distinguished men will recollect individual cases enough to convince him that none but the sick and indolent will ever say, '*I am too old to study.*'

Seek Knowledge.

If you pull up your window a little, it is far likelier to give cold or rheumatism, or stiff neck, than if you throw it wide open; and the chance of any bad consequence becomes still less if you go out into the air, and let it act upon you equally from every side. Is it not just so with knowledge? Do not those who are exposed to a draught of it blowing on them through a crevice, usually grow stiff necked? When you open the windows of your mind, therefore open them as widely as you can, open them, and let the soul send forth its messengers to explore the state of the earth. The best, indeed the only method, of guarding against the mischief which may ensue from teaching men a little, is to teach them more. Knowledge is the true spear of Achilles; nothing but itself can heal the wound it may have inflicted.