## THE ART OF STUDY.

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THE paragraphs quoted below are taken from Dr. Alexander Bain's essay on "The Art of Study," found in his "Practical Essays." They are commended to students and teachers as sound doctrines.

The question, What is the best way to study? is one that both learner and teacher consider far too little. It controls the question, What is the best way to teach? Dr. Bain lays down three fundamental propositions:

(1) In the early days of education, instruction must be narrow. (2) It must be thorough. (3) Only when the pupil is "thoroughly at home on the main ideas," only when "one thread of ideas is firmly set in the mind," only when "one single line of thought " has been wrought into the mental substance, should the teacher begin to be discursive and "broaden" the work. In history, what folly to fall to comparing, interpreting and discussing before the pupil has amassed a store of facts on which to set his reflective faculties at work. In dealing with the history of a country or nation, the first thing to be done is to fix in the pupil's mind firmly the main points—an outline a frame work—in which he can dispose and arrange minor facts and details as he acquires them; or, to change the figure, to provide his mind with a supply of hooks and pegs on which he can hang up, in proper order and in due relation, new facts and ideas as he masters them.

"Our first maxim is —'Select a Text-book-in-chief.' The meaning is, when a large subject is to be overtaken by book study alone, some one work should be chosen to apply to, in the first instance, which work should be conned and mastered before any

other is taken up. There being, in most subjetcs, a variety of good books, the thorough student will not be satisfied in the long run without consulting several and perhaps making a study of them all; yet, it is unwise to distract the attention with more than one, while the elements are to be learnt. In geometry, the pupil begins on Euclid, or some other compendium, and is not allowed to deviate from the single line of his author. If he is once thoroughly at home on the main ideas and the leading propositions of geometry, he is safe in dipping into other manuals, in comparing the differences of treatment, and in widening his knowledge by additional theorems, and by various modes of demonstration. \*

"Undoubtedly, the best of all ways of learning anything is to have a competent master to dole out a fixed quantity every day, just sufficient to be taken in, and no more; the pupils to apply themselves to the matter so imparted, and to do nothing The singleness of aim is favorelse. able to the greatest rapidity of acquirement; and any defects are to be left out of account, until one thread of ideas is firmly set in the mind. Not unfrequently, however, and not improperly, the teacher has a text-book in aid of his oral instruction. То make this a help, and not a hindrance, demands the greatest delicacy ; the sole consideration being that the pupil must be kept in one single line of thought, and never be required to comprehend, on the same point, conflicting or varying statements. Even the foot-notes to a work may have to be disregarded, in the first instance. They may act like a second author, and keep up an irritating friction.