

the country. It is true there are still rogues and vagabonds, but society does not countenance fraud, nor violence, nor knavery, nor lying, nor murder. It is nothing to the purpose to say, that these evils are all still existing among us: as a proof they are not looked upon with favour, continual attempts are made to prevent or put them down. Look at which way we will, there is nothing for it but to choose to do our best. While such penalties attach to going wrong, the greater the reason why we should choose to go right.

The reply of some people when self-improvement is recommended to them is—oh, what's the use? our fathers got along well enough without it, and so can we. But our forefathers lived in caves and woods, and painted their bodies blue—is this a reason why we should do the same? Where would be all the comforts and advantages we enjoy, had no one made attempts after improvement? Progress is one of the laws of our nature; a law which must be obeyed by the high and low, learned and unlearned, because there can be no standing still; if not going forward, we are going backward.

We thus perceive a grand physical necessity for exertion—but the moral necessity is not less imperative. What is it that distinguishes man from the other animals? Why can he do things which animals never attempt? Because he has a mind; he has reason. It is true that bees and beavers, and some other creatures, act as though they were able to reason, but we see that the habits of these animals never change, they build and work just in the same way now as they did thousands of years ago. But by the aid of his mind and reason, man is enabled to alter his condition: instead of going naked, living on raw roots, sleeping under a tree, he can procure clothing, till the ground for food, and build a house for shelter. If he be ignorant, he may enlighten his mind with knowledge; and as God in his goodness has seen fit to make man a reasoning being, so does every man's duty become more impressive, more binding upon him to do all in his power to improve the mind with which he is endowed.

As it is the mind that raises men above animals, so it is the cultivation of the mind that raises one man above another. It is a noble thing to improve the mind; and what one man has done can be done by another. We cannot all succeed to the same extent, but it is best to try for the highest prize. He who aims high, is far more likely to hit his mark, than he who either aims low or badly. Ignorance is the parent of nearly all crime and misery: ignorant people do things which those who are better taught never think of, and if they meet with misfortunes, they are quite at a loss as to the proper means of remedying them. Ignorant people may be said to be stuck fast in a bog, from which they will never get out, until they lay hold of the friendly hand of knowledge.

But we often hear the inquiry—What is the use of knowledge? and there are many persons who believe that knowledge is not worth the trouble it costs to get it. There are few good things, however, which have not been despised or slighted when first brought under notice. How many useful inventions, which have added to the welfare of mankind, were laughed at when first made known! This should teach us not to be discouraged by ridicule: when once engaged in a good cause, we have only to press steadily onwards. Knowledge opens a man's eyes, he understands what is going on around him; he does not take things upon trust, he finds himself armed with new powers and capabilities. Who are the steadiest workmen? those who have done most to improve their minds. Who are the best husbands and fathers? those who have the best knowledge. We do not mean to assert that goodness and kindness cannot exist without education, for it is very possible for a man to be altogether unlearned, and yet be kind and trust-worthy. A man may improve both his mind and his heart, and yet know nothing of what is commonly called learning. But

the chances are, that if an ignorant man do right, it will be only by accident; the educated man knows how and why he ought to do right, and to avoid evil.

The necessity for mental culture is not a small but a great necessity; we must not, however, lose sight of the fact, that if the heart be improved as well as the mind, the value of the benefit is increased a hundred fold. We do not want knowledge just for the mere sake of knowledge, but to make us better and wiser in all we think and do. Most persons like to make profit in some shape, and to this part of the subject we may especially call the attention of the young; it applies equally to girls and boys, to young men and young women. The world is all before you; will you go through it with credit and honor to yourselves and to your friends?—cultivate your minds. Will you leave off living from hand to mouth, and try for comfort and independence?—cultivate your minds. Will you look forward with hope and backward with pleasure?—cultivate your minds. It is not to be expected that we can all rise to be kings and queens, or lords and ladies, but we may all get knowledge and be honest and useful. And this is after all the true way of rising; for if we have these qualities, we are much more likely to be successful and prosperous than without them. To know every day that we are improving, to have that courage and confidence which will enable us to keep on, to feel that we are adding to our pleasures, is surely something well worth living for. If it be desirable for the young to improve their minds, it is not less so for the middle-aged and the old. It is said that we are never too old to learn, so that here the necessity works two or three ways. The young are required to learn, in order that the good service which they are capable of may not be lost, and the old ought to learn so as to show the ripe fruits of good service and good character to those who are coming after.

Knowledge gives a man foresight, he thinks not only of the present, but of the future; he provides for the coming time; if one means of living fail him, he can turn his attention to another. Whatever may be said about rights and privileges, it is very certain that the man who is seeking steadily to inform his mind and improve his heart, is much more likely to get all these rights and privileges than one who only talks about them; he works surely although silently. Looking at the subject in this way, it is hard to say whether the necessity for improving the mind, or the pleasure of so doing, is the greater.

The necessity may be considered in another light. In this country there is a continual advance of society, a continual rising upwards; artisans become employers, employers grow into wholesale traders or merchants, merchants rise into magistrates, or get into parliament—and thus they go on, from one rank to another. Now, if a man does not make up his mind to march with those who are going forwards, he will of course be out-stripped by more active competitors. Most persons have a desire to better their condition; we see some go about it in a business-like way, with them every step tells, there is so much gained; while others are quite at a loss, they have no clear notions of what it is they strive for, and waste their time and labor in uncertainty. The persevering meet with little helps and encouragements on every hand; but the slow and unwilling fancy that every thing is against them, they neither know what to do nor how to do it. The only hope for such people is in mental or self-improvement.

Knowledge, we are sometimes told, is often abused: the fact is not to be denied, but we ought to get knowledge nevertheless. Many medicines are poisons, but that does not prevent us from taking physic when we are ill; neither does the occasional circulation of base coin prevent us from taking good coin when it is offered to us. We recommend all our readers, young and old, to give the matter a fair trial,