branches of knowledge, and hence we shall perhaps get the best answer by considering it in the most comprehensive way.

One often hears it said that a certain branch of study is of a "practical" character, and those who make the remark are usually 'pointing as by a sidegesture' at studies which are supposed to be "unpractical." Now, the contrast intended is undoubtedly real, though the temper which gives point to the distinction, as ordinarily drawn, does not seem to me to be sufficiently impersonal. Teachers of philosophy are so accustomed to have their study spoken of in this way, that the taunt of "unpractical" has lost its sting. "Philosophy bakes no bread," as Novalis says; nor, I may add, will it enable a man to "get on" in life, if by that is meant to become a millionaire, or be a successful candidate for the honours of city or province or dominion; nor, again, will it help a man to invent an electrical machine, or superintend a mine, or manage a cheese factory. For all these things belong to what may fairly be called the "mechanism" of human life. They have, indeed, to do with the means by which ideas are carried into effect, but the ideas with which they work are not themselves of the highest order. We can manage to live without being millionaires, mayors or members of parliament; men have even contrived to live noble and useful lives without electrical machines and telephones; but we cannot live at all, or at least we cannot live a life befitting the dignity of man, without some theory of life, express or implied. Therefore, if a study is to be called "practical," as it ought to be, because it is fitted to influence human action worthily, the most "practical" of all studies is philosophy, the least "practical" such mechanical arts as engineering, surveying and the rest. The truth, however, as I have ventured to hint, is that the whole contrast of studies as "practical" and "unpractical," is one of those rough-and-ready distinctions of which thinking men are very chary. To one who tries as far as possible to keep at the point of view which Plato had in his mind, when he spoke of the philosopher as the "spectator of all time, and of all existence," there is no branch of knowledge which can be called unimportant.

The mood in which we are apt to despise the intellectual pursuits to which others have devoted the whole energy of their lives is due to what might be called the parallax of pre-occupation. When, with a view to work as much as possible into the concrete, and to move about in it with a sure and habitual tread, one gives his attention to the physical sciences, he is sure to find himself gradually getting into the frame of mind in which all other studies come to seem relatively unimportant. And when, with a view to frame as complete a picture of the universe as possible, he seeks to familiarize himself with the fascinating problems of Biology, as illuminated and idealized by the Darwinian conception of development, he may find the physical sciences gradually dwindling in their apparent importance, and at last surviving for him only as a remembrance of what once captured his interest and his energies. And it is the same, I think, when one turns his attention to the masterpieces of Literature, ancient or modern; after a time, longer or shorter according to training and natural bias, one begins to feel at home with his author, to see with his eyes and think with his mind, and to contemplate life from a Greek or Roman, a French or German point of view.

These desultory remarks may make plain what I mean to indicate, when I say that we may exercise biblical criticism of various kinds, according as our mental attitude varies. Take a simple example. There used to be a great deal of controversy about the opening chapters of Genesis. With the progress of the science of Geology, about the middle of this century, the cosmogony therein set forth, came to seem inadequate. How, the scientific man asked, can we admit that the world was created in six days, when the facts show that for six days we must substitute thousands and perhaps millions of years? And some here present may remember what a relief it was to simple pious people, when Hugh Miller suggested that the "days" were not meant to be read literally as "days" but as "periods" or "ages." Now, that is a particular instance of what I mean by a "mechanical" way of reading scripture. Hugh Miller was no doubt right as to his science, but he was entirely wrong in his biblical criticism. I think I have the best authority for saving that there is no warrant for maintaining that the "days" of Genesis were meant to be "ages." The writer did not mean "ages," but days of twenty-four hours. What follows? It does not follow that the world was created in six days, or indeed that it was "created" at all, in the abstract or artificial sense so long attached to the term. The language of Genesis in this connection is the language of poetry and emotion, and the truth of poetry, as I make bold to affirm, is higher than the truth of science, whatever Hugh Miller or his prosiac descendants may say to the contrary. It seems to me, then, that from the point of view of the inspired writer of Genesis, whoever he was, it was a matter of no importance whatever, whether the world was made in six days or in ten million years; but it was to him of supreme importance, that this great and glorious universe is not a dead machine, whirled blendly along with a purposeless and monotonous movement, but is the living vesture of the Eternal, and throbbing in every

٩,

25