

made us reasonable creatures, we often become injurious to our neighbours, kindred, or friends, and we bring sin and misery upon ourselves; for we are accountable to God, our judge, for every part of our irregular and mistaken conduct, while he hath given us sufficient advantages to guard against those mistakes.

There are five eminent means or methods whereby the mind is improved in the knowledge of things; and these are, observation, reading, instruction by lectures, conversation, and meditation; which last, in a most peculiar manner, is called study.

Let us survey the general definitions or descriptions of them all.

I. Observation is the notice that we take of all occurrences in human life, whether they are sensible or intellectual, whether relating to persons or things, to ourselves or others. It is this that furnishes us, even from our infancy, with a rich variety of ideas and propositions, words and phrases: it is by this we know that the fire will burn, that the sun gives light, that a horse eats grass, that an acorn produces an oak, that man is a being capable of reasoning and discourse, that our judgment is weak, that our mistakes are many, that our sorrows are great, that our bodies die and are carried to the grave, and that one generation succeeds another. All those things which we see, which we hear or feel, which we perceive by sense or consciousness, or which we know in a direct manner, with scarce any exercise of our reflecting faculties, or our reasoning powers, may be included under the general name of observation.

When this observation relates to any thing that immediately concerns ourselves, and of which we are conscious, it may be called experience. So I am said to know or experience that I have in myself a power of thinking, fearing, loving, &c., that I have appetites and passions working in me, and many personal occurrences have attended me in this life.

Observation, therefore, includes all that Mr. Locke means by sensation and reflection.

When we are searching out the nature or properties of any being by various methods of trial, or when we apply some active powers, or set some causes to work to observe what effects they would produce, this sort of observation is called experiment. So, when I throw a bullet into water I find it sinks; and when I throw the same bullet into quicksilver, I see it swims; but if I beat out this bullet into a thin hollow shape, like a dish, then it will swim in the water too. So when I strike two flints together, I find they produce fire; when I throw a seed in the earth, it grows up into a plant.

All these belong to the first method of knowledge: which I shall call observation.

II. Reading is that means or method of knowledge whereby we acquaint ourselves with what other men have written, or published to the world in their writings. These arts of reading and writing are of infinite advantage; for by them we are made partakers of the sentiments, observations, reasonings, and improvement of all the learned world, in the most remote nations, and in former ages almost from the beginning of mankind.

III. Public or private lectures are such verbal instructions as are given by a teacher while the learners attend in silence. This is the way of learning religion from the pulpit; or of philosophy or theology from the professor's chair; or of mathematics, by a teacher showing us various theorems or problems, i. e. speculations or practices, by demonstration and operation, with all the instruments of art necessary to those operations.

IV. Conversation is another method of improving our minds, wherein, by mutual discourse and inquiry, we learn the sentiments of others, as well as communicate our sentiments to others in the same manner. Sometimes, indeed, though both parties speak by turns, yet the advantage is only on one side, as when a teacher and a learner meet and discourse together: but frequently the profit is mutual. Under this head of conversation we may also rank disputes of various kinds.

V. Meditation or study includes all those exercises of the mind, whereby we render all the former methods useful for our increase in true knowledge and wisdom. It is by meditation we come to confirm our memory of things that pass through our thoughts in the occurrences of life, in our own experiences, and in the observations we make. It is by meditation that we draw various inferences and establish in our minds general principles of knowledge. It is by meditation that we compare the various ideas which we derive from our senses, or from the operations of our souls, and join them in propositions. It is by meditation that we fix in our memory whatsoever we learn, and form

our own judgment of the truth or falsehood, the strength or weakness, of what others speak or write. It is meditation or study that draws out long chains of argument, and searches and finds deep and difficult truths which before lay concealed in darkness.

It would be a needless thing to prove, that our own solitary meditations, together with the few observations that the most part of mankind are capable of making, are not sufficient, of themselves, to lead us into the attainment of any considerable proportion of knowledge, at least in an age so much improved as ours is, without the assistance of conversation and reading, and other proper instructions that are to be attained in our days. Yet each of these five methods have their peculiar advantages, whereby they assist each other; and their peculiar defects, which have need to be supplied by the others' assistance. Let us trace over some of the particular advantages of each.—*Watts on the Improvement of the Mind.*

(To be Continued.)

## MOTHER'S DEPARTMENT.

### Mothers can do great things.

In England, some years ago, a young man presented himself before a body of clergymen to be examined, that he might be licensed to preach the gospel. His advantages for study had not been very great, and he had many fears that he could not sustain himself, and answer the numerous questions which he knew would be proposed. With a trembling heart he stood up before his fathers and brethren, and one of them asked him with whom he had studied divinity.

The young man was somewhat confused at this question, for he knew very well that he had not enjoyed the instructions of any distinguished divine, and replied with hesitation, "My mother taught me the Scriptures."

Ah," said the minister who had asked the question, "mothers can do great things!"

In these days we have the rich privileges of excellent seminaries of learning, where our youth can go and sit at the feet of wise and holy men, to learn the word of God and seek preparation for the gospel ministry. But who trains these young men for these seminaries? Enter them and ask each student by whose influence he was led to consecrate himself to the service of Christ? Of every ten candidates for the ministry, you will probably find seven, at least, are the sons of pious mothers. Perhaps they were converted in revivals of religion; perhaps far from home; perhaps they are reclaimed prodigals; but they remember maternal counsels, and tears and prayers. Those were the "last links" that were broken when they went astray; those were the first memories awakened when the Holy Spirit commenced the work of their redemption. "Mothers can do great things" in training up ministers of the gospel, and the church is under deep indebtedness to them, for many who are now burning and shining lights on the high places of Zion.

The retired mother in the country, or the unknown mother in the great city, with a little group of children around her knees, may not feel the truth, that there is in her hand the power that may move the world. But the impulse of her heart may be felt all over the earth; overturning thrones, reforming nations, dispelling error, spreading knowledge, and converting souls. She ought to feel this truth, and whenever she imprints a kiss on an infant's cheek, send to heaven a prayer that the child may be an angel of mercy to a perishing world.

That was a pleasant thought of some philosopher, whose name has now gone from me, that sound never ceases; but when a vibration on the air has once been made it extends and travels, diminishing in strength indeed, but never dying; so that the soft whispers of nature which we hear at eventide, are but the warblings of the mightier voices which have started us before, and are now flying on in their ceaseless and almost silent course. Reverse this illustration, and it meets the case before me. Thought never dies. The impress it makes on the mind it first reaches, is communicated to another and another; the circle of its influence, as more minds are touched by its power. Its flight is onward. It crosses mountains and seas and deserts, leaving its mark on every soul it meets; it comes back to its source, and still travels, till it girdles the earth with its strength, and imprints itself on the intellect of the world.