

lection. In selecting the branch of knowledge in which you desire to attain proficiency, some respect must be had, not only to the profession you have chosen,—in which, however, it will, I trust, be ever your study to excel,—but also to the peculiar cast and conformation of your own mind. An individual of distinguished and deserved eminence as an author, once acknowledged to the writer that though *history* amused, it never instructed him, since he could not retain in his memory the facts which came successively before him. Analogous cases may have come within your own observation; and the practical use to be made of them, is to endeavour to find out the peculiar bent of your own minds, since to oppose or contravene this, would not only be useless, but positively injurious.

The variety observable in the *material* works of God,—which contributes so much to their beauty and utility,—may also be detected in the structure of different minds. The intellectual powers of men are almost indefinitely diversified, not only in their individual and combined energy, but also in their relative proportions. One faculty is predominant in one, another in another,—an arrangement wisely and wonderfully adapted to the various exigencies of human life, and contributing to the symmetry and completeness of the mental world. We must not attempt to contravene, but rather conform to this arrangement: and that we may do so, it is necessary diligently to study the peculiar structure of our own mind, that we may discover by what means it may be best improved. I speak at present of *intellectual* improvement exclusively. This hint may suffice on a subject which would require a volume to do it justice, and which in the writer's judgment has not received due attention in any plan of education as yet submitted to the public. The grand secret of intellectual culture appears to him to consist in the judicious and skilful adaptation of the kind and quantity of information to the existing individual capacities of the human mind. The classification usual in our schools and seminaries proceeds on another principle. *Age and stature* are, for the most part, the criteria whereby to determine the line of study; and a number of minds,—each differing, it may be, from all the rest in its peculiar conformation,—are forced to pass through the same process. I am persuaded that much of the inequality so obvious in the attainments of the youth who are thus *corporeally* not *mentally* classified, would disappear, were this absurd arrangement reversed, and were the kind and quantity of seed sown studiously adapted to the quality and capacity of the intellectual soil.

You will never, I trust, make such a grievous mistake, as to imagine that the amount of your reading is the measure of your actual acquisitions. The process of digestion is not more necessary to the nutrition of the body, than is the habit of reflection to the culture of the mind. One good book read with care, and subjected to a rigid process of investigation and analysis, will impart more real and useful knowledge, than many volumes perused in a desultory or perfunctory manner. A book that is worthy of one perusal is always worthy of another; and no book that has obtained a standing reputation should be laid aside until it is thoroughly exhausted, and until its "subject-matter" has become, so to speak, incorporated with the reader's mind. Your intellectual progress may, in this way, seem to be very slow, but it will be proportionably sure. You will not need, as superficial readers generally do, constantly to retrace your steps. Every step you take will be *in advance*; and should you be disposed to suspend your progress for a moment in order to survey the ground over which you have thus cautiously travelled, you will be agreeably surprised at its extent. You will have read fewer books than others, but you will have gained incomparably more accurate and enlarged information; and whilst they may be able to *talk* about many things, you will be able to think accurately and to speak intelligently about a few.

One hint must not be omitted here. It is of great importance that you should keep a record, however brief, of your progress in reading and reflection. The traveller who should trust to his memory alone, whilst passing through a country that is rich in the beauties of nature and the wonders of art, would be able to give but a very poor account at the end of his journey, and would feel but little satisfaction in contemplating the motley mass of images which rise up to the eye of retrospection. If, however, he has kept a *journal*, brief as may be the notices it contains, he has but to examine this record, and a thousand pleasing associations are instantly recalled. Imagination now carries him rapidly but regularly through the various scenes he has witnessed, and vividly

represents the various objects that have come before him;—and should he wish to edify others by his communications, these will be conveyed with an accuracy and an effect which, *without the journal*, no memory, however tenacious, and no imagination, however lively, could secure.

The application of these remarks is easy and obvious; and though it may cost some little trouble thus to journalize your intellectual progress, the advantages of such an exercise will yield an ample compensation. Never part with an author until you have recorded your opinion of him, whether favourable or unfavourable; and, in either case, let your opinion be justified, or, at least, defended and supported, by a reference to the contents of his performance. You may afterwards see reason to reverse or modify your judgment,—and this change of opinion should also be recorded, and with equal care; the record, in all such cases, being accompanied by a statement, more or less in detail, of the grounds on which you rest your justification of the change. This record, viewed merely as an intellectual exercise, will prove greatly beneficial: it will gradually generate the habit of careful and discriminative reflection, and, by furnishing you with a ready and easy method of referring to the works that have come successively before you, will serve,—as occasion requires,—to refresh your memory, and stimulate your further progress. There is one useful purpose, amongst many others, to which this kind of intellectual journalizing will be eminently subservient. You will thus learn to estimate the performances which are successively subjected to the ordeal of a searching and scrutinizing inquiry, by a reference to the real amount of information they contain. The studied and artificial dress in which some authors choose to clothe the most common-place sentiments, will be estimated at its proper worth; whilst other writers who value truth for its own sake, and clothe it with the decent and cleanly attire of nature, will rise in your esteem. You will thus acquire for yourselves that simplicity in the arrangement and expression of your ideas, which you have been led to admire in others,—and secure in early life an acquisition, which is, in most cases, the latest acquisition made in the progress of mental cultivation.

I have alluded, my friends, to the economy of time, as being always, but especially in your circumstance, of incalculable importance. Your hours of business should be carefully husbanded; and this will require no little calculation and forethought. It is not sufficient that they be occupied,—they must be occupied to the best advantage. If really desirous of this, you will sedulously avoid such engagements as would rob you of your time,—the most valuable kind of property committed to your care. None of this will be wasted in vain and frivolous conversation; and when necessity or choice leads you into society, you will endeavour to render social converse subservient to your own improvement or that of others.

Whilst due attention is always to be given to the body, the measure of corporeal relaxation, indulgence, and repose, must be regulated by a reference to the value of time, and the due subordination of the body, as the instrument and medium of mental activity. No valuable acquisition is, or can be made, without some degree of difficulty; and after all the acknowledged improvements as to the acquirement and communication of useful knowledge, it is neither possible nor desirable that the necessity of diligence and labour should be superseded. He who professes to seek for knowledge, and yet meets no difficulties in his path, has good reason to apprehend that he has chosen the wrong one. Yet diligence and decision will do much towards overcoming those real impediments and obstructions with which every one must lay his account who is bent on the cultivation of his mind. I mention *decision* as essential to this; for a wavering, fluctuating, vacillating habit of mind, will render you the slaves of circumstance, and subject you to a thousand annoyances and inconveniences of which you would be otherwise unconscious. Decision will often enable you to bend even adventitious and unforeseen, and, at the moment of their occurrence, unwelcome circumstances into subserviency to your main design.

RIGHT USE OF WEALTH.—Men are apt to measure national prosperity by riches; it would be right to measure it by the use that is made of them. When they promote an honest commerce among men, and are motives to industry and virtue, they are without doubt of great advantage; but where they are made (as too often happens) an instrument to luxury, they enervate and dispirit the bravest people.—*Bishop Berkeley.*