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THE INTELLECTUAL LIFE

PHILIP GILBERT HAMERTON

"Pro qua incurrisse non piget labores, dolores, exilium; quia laborando profui, exulando didici. Quia inveni in brevi labore diuturnam requiem, in levi dolore immensum gaudium, in angusto exilio patriam amplissimam."
GIORDANO BRUNO.

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TO EUGÈNIE H.

We have shared together many hours of study, and you have been willing, at the cost of much patient labour, to cheer the difficult paths of intellectual toil by the unfailing sweetness of your beloved companionship. It seems to me that all those things which we have learned together are doubly my own; whilst those other studies which I have pursued in solitude have never yielded me more than a maimed and imperfect satisfaction. The dream of my life would be to associate you with all I do if that were possible; but since the ideal can never be wholly realized, let me at least rejoice that we have been so little separated, and that the subtle influence of your finer taste and more delicate perception is ever, like some penetrating perfume, in the whole atmosphere around me.

PREFACE.

I PROPOSE, in the following pages, to consider the possibilities of a satisfactory intellectual life under various conditions of ordinary human existence. It will form a part of my plan to take into account favourable and unfavourable influences of many kinds; and my chief purpose, so far as any effect upon others may be hoped for, will be to guard some who may read the book alike against the loss of time caused by unnecessary discouragement, and the waste of effort which is the consequence of misdirected energies.

I have adopted the form of letters addressed to persons of very different position in order that every reader may have a chance of finding what concerns him. The letters, it is unnecessary to observe, are in one sense as fictitious as those we find in novels, for they have never been sent to anybody by the post, yet the persons to whom they are addressed are not imaginary. I made it a rule, from the beginning, to

think of a real person when writing, from an apprehension that by dwelling in a world too exclusively ideal I might lose sight of many impediments which beset all actual lives, even the most exceptional and fortunate.

The essence of the book may be expressed in a few sentences, the rest being little more than evidence or illustration. First, it appears that all who are born with considerable intellectual faculties are urged towards the intellectual life by irresistible instincts, as water-fowl are urged to an aquatic life; but the lower animals have this advantage over man, that as their purposes are simpler, so they attain them more completely than he does. The life of a wild duck is in perfect accordance with its instincts, but the life of an intellectual man is never on all points perfectly in accordance with *his* instincts. Many of the best intellectual lives known to us have been hampered by vexatious impediments of the most various and complicated kinds; and when we come to have accurate and intimate knowledge of the lives led by our intellectual contemporaries, we are always quite sure to find that each of them has some great thwarting difficulty to contend against. Nor is it too much to say that if a man were so placed and endowed in every way that all his work should be made as easy as the ignorant imagine it to be, that man would find in that very facility itself a condition most unfavourable to his

intellectual growth. So that, however circumstances may help us or hinder us, the intellectual life is always a contest or a discipline, and the art or skill of living intellectually does not so much consist in surrounding ourselves with what is reputed to be advantageous as in compelling every circumstance and condition of our lives to yield us some tribute of intellectual benefit and force. The needs of the intellect are as various as intellects themselves are various; and if a man has got high mental culture during his passage through life it is of little consequence where he acquired it, or how. The school of the intellectual man is the place where he happens to be, and his teachers are the people, books, animals, plants, stones, and earth round about him. The feeling almost always predominant in the minds of intellectual men as they grow older, is not so much one of regret that their opportunities were not more abundant, as of regret that they so often missed opportunities which they might have turned to better account.

I have written for all classes, in the conviction that the intellectual life is really within the reach of everyone who earnestly desires it. The highest culture can never be within the reach of those who cannot give the years of labour which it costs; and if we cultivate ourselves to shine in the eyes of others, to become famous in literature or science, then of course we must give many more hours of labour than can be spared

from a life of practical industry. But I am fully convinced of this, convinced by the observation of living instances in all classes, that any man or woman of large natural capacity may reach the tone of thinking which may justly be called intellectual, even though that thinking may not be expressed in the most perfect language. The essence of intellectual living does not reside in extent of science or in perfection of expression, but in a constant preference for higher thoughts over lower thoughts, and this preference may be the habit of a mind which has not any very considerable amount of information. This may be very easily demonstrated by a reference to men who lived intellectually in ages when science had scarcely begun to exist, and when there was but little literature that could be of use as an aid to culture. The humblest subscriber to a mechanics' institute has easier access to sound learning than had either Solomon or Aristotle, yet both Solomon and Aristotle lived the intellectual life. Whoever reads English is richer in the aids to culture than Plato was, yet Plato *thought* intellectually. It is not erudition that makes the intellectual man, but a sort of virtue which delights in vigorous and beautiful thinking, just as moral virtue delights in vigorous and beautiful conduct. Intellectual living is not so much an accomplishment as a state or condition of the mind in which it seeks earnestly for the highest and purest truth. It is the continual

exercise of a firmly noble choice between the larger truth and the lesser, between that which is perfectly just and that which falls a little short of justice. The ideal life would be to choose thus firmly and delicately always, yet if we often blunder and fail for want of perfect wisdom and clear light, have we not the inward assurance that our aspiration has not been all in vain, that it has brought us a little nearer to the Supreme Intellect whose effulgence draws us whilst it dazzles? Here is the true secret of that fascination which belongs to intellectual pursuits, that they reveal to us a little more, and yet a little more, of the eternal order of the Universe, establishing us so firmly in what is known, that we acquire an unshakable confidence in the laws which govern what is not, and never can be, known.

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THE

INTELLECTUAL LIFE.

PART I.

THE PHYSICAL BASIS.

LETTER I.

TO A YOUNG MAN OF LETTERS WHO WORKED EXCESSIVELY.

Mental labour believed to be innocuous to healthy persons—Difficulty of testing this—Case of the poet Wordsworth—Case of an eminent living author—Case of a literary clergyman—Case of an energetic tradesman—Instances of two Londoners who wrote professionally—Scott's paralysis—Byron's death—All intellectual labour proceeds on a physical basis.

The nervous system.

So little is really known about the action of the nervous system, that to go into the subject from the physiological point of view would be to undertake a most difficult investigation, entirely beyond the competence of an unscientific person like your present correspondent. You will, therefore, permit me, in reference to this, to leave you to the teaching of the most advanced

PART 1. LETTER 1.

physiologists of the time; but I may be able to offer a few practical suggestions, based on the experience of intellectual workers, which may be of use to a man whose career is likely to be one of severe and almost uninterrupted intellectual labour.

Operation of disease.

A paper was read several years ago before the members of a society in London, in which the author maintained that mental labour was never injurious to a perfectly healthy human organization, and that the numerous cases of break-down, which are commonly attributed to excessive brain-work, are due, in reality, to the previous operation of disease.

This is one of those assertions which cannot be answered in a sentence. Concentrated within the briefest expression it comes to this, that mental labour cannot produce disease, but may aggravate the consequences of disease which already exists.

Effect of brainwork.

The difficulty of testing this is obvious; for so long as health remains quite perfect, it remains perfect, of course, whether the brain is used or not; and when failure of health becomes manifest, it is not always easy to decide in what degree mental labour may have been the cause of it. Again, the accuracy of so general a statement cannot be proved by any number of instances in its favour, since it is universally admitted that brain-work is not the only cause of disease, and no one affirms that it is more than one amongst many causes which may impede the bodily functions.

Wordsworth

When the poet Wordsworth was engaged in composing the "White Doe of Rylstone," he received a wound in his foot, and he observed that the continuation of his literary labour increased the irritation of the wound; whereas by suspending his work he could diminish it,

and absolute mental rest produced a perfect cure. In connection with this incident he remarked that poetic excitement, accompanied by protracted labour in composition, always brought on more or less of bodily derangement. He preserved himself from permanently injurious consequences by his excellent habits of life.

Poetic excitement.

A very eminent living author, whose name I do not feel at liberty to mention, is always prostrated by severe illness at the conclusion of each of his works; another is unwell every Sunday, because he does not write on that day, and the recoil after the mental stretch of the week is too much for him.

Two living authors.

In the case of Wordsworth, the physical constitution is believed to have been sound. His health at seventy-two was excellent; the two other instances are more doubtful in this respect, yet both these writers enjoy very fair health, after the pressure of brain-work has been removed for any considerable time. A clergyman of robust organization, who does a good deal of literary work at intervals, told me that, whenever he had attempted to make it regular, the consequence had always been distressing nervous sensations, from which at other times he was perfectly free. A tradesman, whose business affords an excellent outlet for energetic bodily activity, told me that having attempted, in addition to his ordinary work, to acquire a foreign language which seemed likely to be useful to him, he had been obliged to abandon it on account of alarming cerebral symptoms. This man has immense vigour and energy, but the digestive functions, in this instance, are sluggish. However, when he abandoned study, the cerebral inconveniences disappeared, and have never returned since.

A clergyman.

A tradesman.

Two Londoners who followed literature as a profession,

PART I. LETTER I.

Two Londoners.

and who both worked to excess, had cerebral attacks of a still more decided kind. One of them, after his recovery, resolved to regulate his work in future, so that it might never pass the limits of moderation. He is now living, and in possession of a remarkably clear and richly furnished intellect. The other, who returned to his old habits, died in two years from softening of the brain. I am not aware that in these cases there was any other disease than that produced by an immoderate use of the mental powers.

Sir Walter Scott.

The health of Sir Walter Scott—we have this on his own testimony—was uncommonly robust, and there is every reason to believe that his paralysis was brought on by the excessive labour which resulted from his pecuniary embarrassments, and that without such excessive mental labour and anxiety he would have preserved his

Byron.

health much longer. The death of Byron was due, no doubt, quite as much to habits of dissipation as to poetical excitement; still it is probable that he would have borne either of these evil influences if it had not been accompanied by the other; and that to a man whose way of life was so exhausting as Byron's was, the addition of constant poetical excitement, and hard work in production, may be said without exaggeration to have killed him. We know that Scott, with all his facility, had a dread of that kind of excitement, and withdrew from the poetical arena to avoid it. We know, too, that

Southey.

the brain of Southey proved ultimately unable to endure the burden of the tasks he laid upon it.

Difficult as it may be in some instances to ascertain quite accurately whether an overworked man had perfectly sound bodily health to begin with, obvious as it may be that in many breakdowns the final failure has

been accelerated by diseases independent of mental work, the facts remain, that the excessive exercise of the mental powers is injurious to bodily health, and that all intellectual labour proceeds upon a physical basis. No man can safely forget this, and act as if he were a pure spirit, superior to physical considerations. Let me then, in other letters on this subject, direct your attention to the close connection which exists between intellectual production and the state of the body and the brain; not with the authority of a physician, but with the sympathy of a fellow-labourer, who has learned something from his own experience, and still more from the more varied experience of his friends.

LETTER II.

TO A YOUNG MAN OF LETTERS WHO WORKED EXCESSIVELY.

Mental labour rarely compatible with the best physical conditions—Wordsworth's manner of composition—Mr. W. F. A. Delane—George Sand working under pressure—Sir Walter Scott's field-sports—Physical exercise the best tranquillizer of the nervous system—Eugène Sue—Shelley's love of boating—Nervousness the affliction of brain-workers—Nature's kindly warning—Working by spurts—Beckford—Byron—Indolence of men of genius fortunate—Distressing nature of cerebral fatigue.

Indirect results.

IT is possible that many of the worst results of intellectual labour may be nothing more than indirect results. We may suffer, not from the work itself, but from sedentary confinement, from want of exercise, from insufficient variety and amusement.

Mental labour is seldom compatible with the best physical conditions; it is so sometimes, however, or

PART I LETTER II.

may be made so by an effort of will and resolution. Wordsworth composed his poetry in the open air, as he walked, and so preserved himself from the evil of close confinement to the desk. Mr. W. F. A. Delane, who did so much for the organization of the *Times* newspaper when it was under his management, began by doing law reports for that paper, in London and on circuit. His appearance of rude health surprised other members of his profession, but he accounted for it by the care he took to compensate for the bad air and sedentary labour in the courts of law by travelling between the assize towns on horseback, and also by a more than commonly temperate way of life, since he carefully avoided the bar dinners, eating and drinking for health alone. It is possible to endure the most unhealthy labour when there are frequent intervals of invigorating exercise, accompanied by habits of strict sobriety. The plan, so commonly resorted to, of trying to get health in stock for the rest of the year by a fortnight's hurried travelling in the autumn, is not so good as Mr. Delane's way of getting the week's supply of health during the course of the week itself.

Mr. Delane.

Health in stock.

George Sand.

It happened once that George Sand was hurried by the proprietor of a newspaper who wanted one of her novels as a *feuilleton*. She has always been a careful and deliberate worker, very anxious to give all necessary labour in preparation, and, like all such conscientious labourers she can scarcely endure to be pushed. However, on this occasion she worked overtime, as they say in Lancashire, and to enable herself to bear the extra pressure she did part of the work at night in order to keep several hours of daylight clear for her walks in the country, where she lived. Many writers, in the same situation, would have

temporarily abandoned exercise, but George Sand clung to it all the more at a time when it was especially necessary that she should be well. In the same way Sir Walter Scott counterbalanced the effects of sedentary occupation by his hearty enjoyment of field-sports. It has been supposed that his outdoor exercise, which to weaker persons appears excessive, may have helped to bring on the stroke of paralysis which finally disabled him; but the fact is, that when the stroke arrived Sir Walter had altered his habits of life in obedience to what he believed to be his duty, and had abandoned, or nearly so, the active amusements of his happier years. I believe rather that whilst he took so much exercise his robust constitution not only enabled him to endure it without injury, but required it to keep the nervous system healthy, in spite of his hard work in literary composition. Physical exercise, when the constitution is strong enough to endure it, is by far the best tranquillizer of the nervous system which has yet been discovered, and Sir Walter's life at Abbotsford was, in this respect at least, grounded on the true philosophy of conduct. The French romancer, Eugène Sue, wrote till ten o'clock every morning, and passed the rest of the day, when at his country-house, either in horse-exercise, or field-sports, or gardening, for all of which he had a liking which amounted to passion. Shelley's delight was boating, which at once exercised his muscles and relieved his mind from the weariness of incessant invention or speculation. It will generally be found, that whenever a man of much intellectual distinction has maintained his powers in full activity, it has been by avoiding the bad effects of an entirely sedentary life.

Scott's field sports.

Eugène Sue

Shelley's love of boating.

I well believe that a person naturally robust, with a clear and powerful brain, could bear twelve or fourteen

PART I. LETTER II.

hours' work every day for years together so far as the work itself is concerned, if only so large an expenditure of time left a sufficient margin for amusement, and exercise, and sleep. But the privation of exercise, by weakening the digestive and assimilative powers, reduces the flow of healthy and rich blood to the brain—the brain requires an enormous quantity of blood, especially when the cerebral matter is rapidly destroyed by intellectual labour—and usually brings on nervousness, the peculiar affliction of the over-driven mental labourer. This nervousness is Nature's kindly warning, preserving us, if we attend to it in time, from much more serious consequences. The best preventive of it, and often the only cure, is plenty of moderate exercise. The customs of the upper classes in England happily provide this in the best shape, that of amusement enjoyed in society, but our middle classes in large towns do not get nearly enough of it, and the most studious are always strongly tempted to neglect it altogether.

Privation of exercise.

Nervousness.

Men of great imaginative power are commonly addicted to a habit which is peculiarly dangerous. They work as race-horses work, with the utmost intensity of effort during short spaces of time, taxing all their powers whilst the brilliant effort lasts. When Beckford wrote the wonderful tale "Vathek" in his twentieth year, he did it at a single sitting, which lasted for three days and two nights, and it cost him a serious illness. Several of the best poems by Byron were written, if not quite with equal rapidity, still on the same principle of composition at white heat. In cases of this kind, Nature provides her own remedy in the indolence of the imaginative temperament, which leaves large spaces of time for the action of the recuperative processes. The same law governs the physical energies of

Intense efforts.

Indolence a remedy.

the carnivora, which maintain, or recover, their capacity for extraordinary effort by intervals of absolute repose. In its long spaces of mental rest the imaginative temperament recruits itself by amusement, which in England usually includes physical exercise of some kind.

Commands of necessity.

This fortunate indolence of men of genius would in most instances ensure their safety if they were not impelled by necessity to labour beyond the suggestions of inclination. The exhausted brain never of itself seeks the additional exhaustion of hard work. You know very well when you are tired, and at such times the natural man in you asks plainly enough for rest and recreation. The art is so to arrange our lives that the natural man may sometimes have his way, and forget, if only for a time, the labours which lead to weariness—not to that pleasant weariness of the body which promises soundest sleep, but the distressing fatigue of the exhausted spirit which is tortured by the importunity of ideas which it is unable to express, and apprehensions that it cannot dismiss, which fights through the sleepless night the phantoms of unconquerable horror.

Brain-weariness.

NOTE.—The bad effect of literary composition on the physical state which was observed by Wordsworth in his own case was also noticed by Shelley during the composition of the "Cenci," which, he said, had been a fine antidote to nervous medicines, and kept, he believed, the pain in his side "as sticks do a fire." These influences are best observed in people whose health is delicate. Although Joubert, for example, had an extremely clear intellect, he could scarcely write at all on account of the physical consequences. I have come to the conclusion that literary work *acts simply as a strong stimulant.* In moderate quantities it is not only innocent, but decidedly beneficial; in excess it acts like poison on the nervous system. What constitutes excess every man has to find out by his own experience. A page was excess to Joubert, a chapter was moderation to Alexandre Dumas.

Joubert.

Excess.

PART I. LETTER III.

LETTER III.

TO A STUDENT IN UNCERTAIN HEALTH.

Habits of Kant, the philosopher—Objection to an over-minute regularity of habit—Value of independence of character—Case of an English author—Case of an English resident in Paris—Scott an abundant eater and drinker—Goethe also—An eminent French publisher—Turgot—Importance of good cookery—Wine drinking—Ale—The aid of stimulants treacherous—The various effects of tobacco—Tea and coffee—Case of an English clergyman—Balzac—The Arabian custom of coffee-drinking—Wisdom of occasionally using stimulants.

Kant.

IMMANUEL KANT, who was a master in the art of taking care of himself, had by practice acquired a dexterous mode of folding himself up in the bed-clothes, by passing them over and under his shoulders, so that, when the operation was complete, he was shut up like the silkworm in his cocoon. "When I am thus snugly folded up in my bed," he would say to his friends, "I say to myself, can any man be in better health than I am?"

There is nothing in the lives of philosophers more satisfactory than this little passage. If Kant had said to himself, "Can anybody be wiser, more learned, more justly deserving of immortal fame than I am?" we should have felt, that however agreeable this opinion might have been to the philosopher who held it, his private satisfaction stood in need of confirmation from without; and even if he had really been all this, we might have reflected that wisdom and learning still leave their possessor exposed to the acutest kinds of suffering. But when a philosopher rolls himself up at night, and congratulates himself on the possession of perfect health, we only think what a happy

His good health.

man he was to possess that first of blessings, and what a sensible man to know the value of it! And Kant had a deeper happiness in this reflection than any which could spring from the mere consciousness of possessing one of the unearned gifts of nature. The excellence of his health was due in part to a sufficiently good constitution, but it was due also to his own extreme carefulness about his habits. By an unceasing observation of his own bodily life, as far as possible removed from the anxiety of hypochondriacs, he managed to keep the physical machine in such regular order, that for more than thirty years he always rose precisely at the same minute. If his object had been health for health's sake, the result would still have been well worth any sacrifices of momentary inclination that it cost him; but Kant had a higher purpose. He well knew that the regularity of the intellectual life depended entirely on the regularity of the bodily functions, and, unlike the foolish men alluded to by Goethe who pass the day in complaining of headache, and the night in drinking the wine that produces it, Kant not only knew that regular health was necessary to his work as a philosopher, but did everything in his power to preserve it. Few intellectual labourers have in this respect given evidence of such persistent strength of will.

Kant's careful habits.

Regularity in mind and body.

In his manner of living he did not consult custom, but the needs of his individual nature. It is not always easy for great brain-workers to follow with perfect fidelity the customs of the people about them. These usages have been gradually formed by the majority to suit the needs of the majority; but there are cases where a close adherence to them would be a serious hindrance to the highest and best activity. A good example

Custom.

PART I. LETTER III.

of this is Kant's intense antipathy to beer. It did not suit him, and he was right in his non-conformity to German usage on this point, but he was mistaken in believing beer to be universally injurious. There is a very general belief in England that what is called a good breakfast is the foundation of the labour of the day. Kant's breakfast, which he took at five in the morning at all the seasons of the year, consisted of a cup of tea and a pipe of tobacco. On this he worked eight hours, either in lecturing or writing—a long stretch of uninterrupted labour. He dined at one, and this was his only meal, for he had no supper. The single repast was a deviation from ordinary usage, but Kant found that it suited him, probably because he read in the evening from six till a quarter to ten, and a second meal might have interfered with this by diminishing his power of attention. There exists a strong medical objection to this habit of taking only one meal in twenty-four hours, which indeed is almost unknown in England, though not extremely rare on the Continent. I know an old gentleman who for forty years has lived as Kant did, and enjoys excellent health and uncommon mental clearness.

Beer.

Breakfast.

Kant's one meal.

The night's rest.

A detail which illustrates Kant's attention to whatever could affect his physical life, is his rule to withdraw his mind from everything requiring effort fifteen minutes before he went to bed. His theory, which is fully confirmed by the experience of others, was, that there was a risk of missing sleep if the brain was not tranquillized before bed-time. He knew that the intellectual life of the day depended on the night's rest, and he took this precaution to secure it. The regularity of his daily walk, taken during the afternoon in all weathers, and the strict

limitation of the hours of rest, also helped the soundness of his sleep.

He would not walk out in company, for the whimsical reason that if he opened his mouth a colder air would reach his lungs than that which passed through the nostrils; and he would not eat alone, but always had guests to dinner. There are good physiological reasons in favour of pleasant society at table, and, besides these, there are good intellectual reasons also.

Society at table.

By attention to these rules of his, Kant managed to keep both body and mind in a working order, more uninterrupted than is usual with men who go through much intellectual labour. The solitary objection to his system is the excessive regularity of habit to which it bound him by chains of his own forging. He found a quiet happiness in this regularity; indeed, happiness is said to be more commonly found in habit than in anything else, so deeply does it satisfy a great permanent instinct of our nature. But a *minute* regularity of habit is objectionable, because it can only be practicable at home, and is compatible only with an existence of the most absolute tranquillity. Kant did not travel, and never could have travelled. He was a bachelor, and could not have ceased to be a bachelor, without a disturbance that would have been intolerable to him. He enjoyed the full benefits of his system without experiencing its disadvantages, but any considerable change of situation would have made the disadvantages apparent. Few lives can be so minutely regulated without risk of future inconvenience.

Regularity of habit.

May be too minute.

Kant's example is a good one so far as this, that it proved a sort of independence of character which would be valuable to every student. All who need to keep their minds in the best possible condition ought to have reso-

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Custom not always to be obeyed.

lution enough to regulate their living in a manner which experience, in their case, proves to be most favourable. Whatever may be the authority of custom, a wise man makes himself independent of usages which are impediments to his best activity. I know an author who was always unwell about eleven o'clock in the morning—so unwell that he could do nothing but lament his miserable fate. Knowing by experience the powerful effect of regimen, I inquired whether he enjoyed his breakfast. "No, he did not." "Then why did he attempt to eat any breakfast?" It turned out that this foolish man swallowed every morning two cups of bad coffee and a quantity of greasy food, from a patriotic deference to the customs of his country. He was persuaded to abandon this unsuitable habit and to eat nothing till half-past ten, when his adviser prescribed a well-cooked little *déjeuner à la fourchette*, accompanied by half a bottle of sound Bordeaux. The effect was magical. My friend felt light and cheerful before *déjeuner*, and worked quite happily and well, whilst after *déjeuner* he felt like a horse that has eaten his corn. Nor was the good effect a transitory one; the bad symptoms never returned, and he still adheres to his new arrangement. This little reform made a wretched existence happy, and has had for its result an increase in production with a diminution of fatigue. The explanation is that the stomach did not ask for the early breakfast, and had a hard fight to overcome it, after which came exhaustion and a distaste both for food and work. There are cases where an opposite rule is the right one. An Englishman living in Paris found the French *déjeuner* unsuitable for him, and discovered that he worked best on a substantial English breakfast, with strong tea, at eight in the morning, after which he went on working all

Two instances.

day without any further nourishment till dinner at six in the evening. A friend of Sir Walter Scott's, who had stayed with him at Abbotsford, told me that Sir Walter ate and drank like everybody else as to times and seasons, but much more abundantly than people of less vigorous organization. Goethe used to work till eleven without taking anything, then he drank a cup of chocolate and worked till one. "At two he dined. This meal was the important meal of the day. His appetite was immense. Even on the days when he complained of not being hungry he ate much more than most men. Puddings, sweets, and cakes were always welcome. He sat a long while over his wine. He was fond of wine, and drank daily his two or three bottles." An eminent French publisher, one of the most clear-headed and hard-working men of his generation, never touched food or drink till six in the evening, when he ate an excellent dinner with his guests. He found this system favourable to his work, but a man of less robust constitution would have felt exhausted in the course of the day.

Scott as an eater.

Goethe at table.

A French publisher.

Turgot could not work well till after he had dined copiously, but many men cannot think after a substantial meal; and here, in spite of the example set by Scott and Goethe, let me observe that nothing interferes so much with brainwork as over-eating. The intellectual workman requires nourishment of the best possible quality, but the quantity ought always to be well within the capacity of his digestive powers. The truth appears to be, that whilst the intellectual life makes very large demands upon nutrition—for cerebral activity cannot go forward without constant supplies of force, which must come ultimately from what we have eaten—this kind of life, being sedentary, is unfavourable to the work of digestion. Brain-

Turgot.

Over-eating

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Quality of food.

workers cannot eat like sportsmen and farmers without losing many hours in torpor, and yet they need nutrition as much as if they led active lives. The only way out of this difficulty is to take care that the food is good enough for a moderate quantity of it to maintain the physical and mental powers The importance of scientific cookery can hardly be exaggerated. Intellectual labour is, in its origin, as dependent upon the art of cookery as the dissemination of its results is dependent upon paper-making and printing. This is one of those matters which people cannot be brought to consider seriously; but cookery in its perfection—the great science of preparing food in the way best suited to our use—is really the most important of all sciences, and the mother of the arts. The wonderful theory that the most ignorant cookery is the most favourable to health is only fit for the dark ages. It is grossly and stupidly untrue. A scientific cook will keep you in regular health, when an ignorant one will offer you the daily alternative of starving or indigestion.

Importance of cookery.

Wines.

The great question of drinks is scarcely less important. Sound natural wines, not strengthened by any addition of alcohol, are known to supply both stimulus and nourishment to the brain. Goethe's practice was not irrational, though he drank fifty thousand bottles in his lifetime. Still it is not necessary to imitate him to this extent. The wine-drinking populations have keener and livelier wits than those who use other beverages. It is proved by long experience that the pure juice of the grape sustains the force and activity of the brain. The poets who from age to age have sung the praise of wine were not wholly either deceivers or deceived. In the lands of the vine, where the plant is looked upon as a nursing-mother, men do not injure their health by drinking; but in the colder

North, where the grape can never ripen, the deaths from intemperance are frequent. Bread and wine are almost pure gifts of nature, though both are prepared by man after the old traditional ways. These are not poisons, but gin and absinthe are poisons, madness poured out from a bottle! Kant and Goethe loved the pure Rhine wine, and their brains were clear and vigorous to the utmost span of life. It was not wine that ruined Burns and Byron, or Baudelaire, or Alfred de Musset.

Effect of wine.

Notwithstanding Kant's horror of beer, that honest northern drink deserves our friendly recognition. It has quite a peculiar effect upon the nervous system, giving a rest and calm which no other drink can procure for it so safely. It is said that beer drinkers are slow, and a little stupid; that they have an ox-like placidity not quite favourable to any brilliant intellectual display. But there are times when this placidity is what the labouring brain most needs. After the agitations of too active thinking there is safety in a tankard of ale. The wine drinkers are agile, but they are excitable; the beer drinkers are heavy, but in their heaviness there is peace. In that clear golden drink which England has brewed for more than a thousand Octobers, and will brew for a thousand more, we may find perhaps some explanation of that absence of irritability which is the safeguard of the national character, which makes it faithful in its affections, easy to govern, not easy to excite to violence.

Beer and ale.

If I have spoken favourably of beer and wine as having certain intellectual uses, please remember that I recommend only the habitual use of them, not mad rites of Bacchus, and even the habitual use only just so far as it may suit the individual constitution. The liberal regimen

Needs of the individual

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of Scott and Goethe would not answer in every case, and there are organizations, often very robust, in which intoxicating drinks of all kinds, even in the most moderate quantity, impede the brain's action instead of aiding it.

Men unable to use pure wine.

Two of the most able men I have ever known could not drink pure wine of any kind because it sent the blood to the head, with consequent cerebral oppression. And whilst on this subject I ought to observe, that the aid which these stimulants afford, even when the body gratefully accepts them, is often treacherous from its very acceptability. Men who are over-driven—and the number of such men is unhappily very great in these days—say that without stimulants they could not get through their labour;

Stimulants liable to deceive.

but the stimulants often delude us as to the limits of our natural powers and encourage us to attempt too much. The help they give us is not altogether illusory ; under certain limitations it is real, but many have gone farther than the reality of the assistance warranted. The ally brings to us an increase of forces, but he comes with appearances of power surpassing the reality, and we undertake tasks beyond our strength. In drinking, as in eating, the best rule for the intellectual is moderation in quantity with good quality, a sound wine, and not enough of it to foster self-delusion.

Effects of tobacco.

The use of tobacco has so much extended itself in the present generation that we are all obliged to make a decision for ourselves on the ancient controversy between its friends and enemies. We cannot form a reasonable opinion about tobacco without bearing in mind that it produces, according to circumstances, one of two entirely distinct and even opposite classes of effects. In certain states of the body it acts as a stimulant, in other states as a narcotic. People who have a

Effects of tobacco.

dislike to smoking affirm that it stupifies; but this assertion, at least so far as the temporary consequences are concerned, is not supported by experience. Most of the really brilliant conversations that I have listened to have been accompanied by clouds of tobacco-smoke; and a great deal of the best literary composition that is produced by contemporary authors is wrought by men who are actually smoking whilst they work. My own experience is that very moderate smoking acts as a pleasant stimulus upon the brain, whilst it produces a temporary lassitude of the muscular system, not perceptible in times of rest, but an appreciable hindrance in times of muscular exertion. It is better therefore for men who feel these effects from tobacco to avoid it when they are in exercise, and to use it only when the body rests and the mind labours. Pray remember, however, that this is the experience of an exceedingly moderate smoker, who has not yet got himself into the general condition of body which is brought on by a larger indulgence in tobacco. On the other hand, it is evident that men engaged in physical labour find a muscular stimulus in occasional smoking, and not a temporary lassitude. It is probable that the effect varies with individual cases, and is never precisely what our own experience would lead us to imagine. For excessive smokers, it appears to be little more than the tranquillizing of a sort of uneasiness, the continual satisfaction of a continual craving. I have never been able to ascertain that moderate smoking diminished intellectual force; but I have observed in excessive smokers a decided weakening of the will, and a preference for talking about work to the effort of actual labour. The opinions of medical men on this subject are so much at variance that their science only adds to

Excessive smoking

Medical opinions

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our uncertainty. One doctor tells me that the most moderate smoking is unquestionably injurious, whilst others affirm that it is innocent. Speaking simply from self-observation, I find that in my own case tea and coffee are far more perilous than tobacco.

Tea-drinking.

Almost all English people are habitual tea-drinkers, and as the tea they drink is very strong, they may be said to use it in excess. The unpleasant symptoms which tea-poisoning produces in a patient not inured by habit, disappear in the seasoned tea-drinker, leaving only a certain exhilaration, which appears to be perfectly innocuous. If tea is a safe stimulant, it is certainly an agreeable one, and there seems to be no valid reason why brain-workers should refuse themselves that solace.

A clerical tea-drinker.

I knew a worthy clergyman many years ago who from the most conscientious motives denied himself ale and wine, but found a fountain of consolation in the tea-pot. His usual allowance was sixteen cups, all of heroic strength, and the effect upon his brain seems to have been altogether favourable, for his sermons were both long and eloquent, and to this day he is preaching still, without any diminution of his powers. French people find in

Coffee in France,

coffee the most efficacious remedy for the temporary torpor of the mind which results from the processes of digestion. Balzac drank great quantities of coffee whilst he wrote; and this, it is believed, brought on the terrible nervous disease that accelerated his end. The best proof that tea and coffee are favourable to intellectual expression is that all nations use one or the other as aids

and in Arabia.

to conversation. In Mr. Palgrave's Travels in Arabia there is never any talk without the inevitable coffee, that fragant Arabian berry prepared with such delicate cunning that it yields the perfect aroma.

The wisdom of occasionally using these various stimulants for intellectual purposes is proved by a single consideration. Each of us has a little cleverness and a great deal of sluggish stupidity. There are certain occasions when we absolutely need the little cleverness that we possess. The orator needs it when he speaks, the poet when he versifies, but neither cares how stupid he may become when the oration is delivered and the lyric set down on paper. The stimulant serves to bring out the talent when it is wanted, like the wind in the pipes of an organ. "What will it matter if I am even a little duller afterwards?" says the genius; "I can afford to be dull when I have done." But the truth still remains that there are stimulants and stimulants. Not the nectar of the gods themselves were worth the dash of a wave upon the beach, and the pure cool air of the morning.

Practical service of stimulants

NOTE.—What is said in the above letter about the employment of stimulants is intended to apply only to cases in which there is no organic disease. The harm which diseased persons do to themselves by conforming to customs which are innocent for others is as lamentable as it is easily avoidable. Two bottles of any natural wine grown above the latitude of Lyons are a permissible daily allowance to a man whose organs are all sound; but the doctors in the wine districts unanimously forbid pure wine when there is a chronic inflammatory tendency. In these cases even the most honest Bordeaux ought to be diluted with twice its volume of water. There are many chronic diseases which tobacco irritates and accelerates. Both wine and tobacco are injurious to weak eyes.

Diseased persons.

PART I. LETTER IV.

LETTER IV.

TO A MUSCULAR CHRISTIAN.

Muscular and intellectual tendencies in two boys—Difficulty of finding time to satisfy both—Plato on the influences of music and gymnastics—Somnolence and digestion—Neglect of literature—Natural restlessness of the active temperament—Case of a Garibaldian officer—Difficulty of taking a sufficent interest in exercise—A boar hunt.

Two little brothers

I KNOW two little boys, sons of a near neighbour, who have from childhood exhibited opposite tendencies. One of them is incessantly active, always out of doors in any weather, busy about horses, and farming, and game, heedless of his books, and studying only under positive compulsion. The other sits at home with his lessons or a story-book, and only goes out because he is incited by the fraternal example. The two lads represent two distinct varieties of human life, the active and the intellectual. The elder is happiest during physical exertion; the younger is happiest when his brain is fully occupied. Left entirely to themselves, without the equalizing influence of the outside world and the ways of living which general custom has established, they would lead the most opposite lives. The elder would inevitably become a farmer, that he might live in the country and take exercise all day long, or else he would seek adventure in wild travel, or in romantic warfare; but the younger would very quickly be taken possession of by some engrossing intellectual pursuit, and lead the life of a sedentary student. The problem which these two young lives have before them is the reconciliation of their tendencies. Since they come of cultivated parents, the intellectual lad has the better

chance of following his own bent. Both will have to take their University degrees, and the younger has the advantage there. Still there are powerful influences in favour of the elder. His activity will be encouraged by the admiration of his companions, and by the example of the country gentlemen who are his neighbours. He can ride, and row, and swim; he is beginning to shoot; at twenty he will be a sportsman. When once he has taken his degree, I wonder what will be the advances in his intellectual culture. Fraternal and social influences will preserve the younger from absolute physical inaction; but there are not any influences powerful enough to keep the elder safe from intellectual rust.

A sportsman and athlete.

If you, who are a distinguished sportsman and athlete, would kindly inform us with perfect frankness of the line which your studies have followed since you quitted Eton, we should be the wiser for your experience. Have gymnastic exercises hardened you, as Plato said they did, when pursued excessively? and do you need the musical studies which he both valued and dreaded as the most powerful of softening influences? If you have energy enough to lead both lives, pray how do you find the time?

In the evening.

As to Plato's musical influence, you invite it, and yet you treacherously elude its power. After being out all day in the pursuit of sylvan pleasures (if shooting on treeless wastes can be called a sylvan pleasure), you come home at nightfall ravenous. Then you do ample justice to your dinner, and having satisfied your *faim de chasseur*, you go into the drawing-room, and ask your wife to play and sing to you. If Plato could witness that pretty scene, he would approve your obedience to his counsels. He would behold an athletic Englishman stretching his mighty limbs on a couch of soft repose, and letting his soul grow

tender as his ears drank ravishing harmonies. If, however, the ancient sage, delighted with so sweet a picture of strength refined by song, were to dwell upon the sight as I have done, he would perceive too soon that, although your body was present indeed, your soul had become deaf in sleep's oblivion. So it happens to you night after night, and the music reaches you no more than the songs of choristers reach the dead in the graves below.

The sportsman's reading.

And the elevating influences of literature? You have books, of course, in abundance. There is a library, amongst other luxuries of your home. But the literature your intellect feeds upon is in the columns of the *Field*, your newspaper. Yet this neglect of the means of culture is not due to any natural feebleness of the mind. Your brain, by its nature, is as vigorous as your vigorous body. It is sleep, and weariness, and the great necessary business of digestion, that drown your intellectual energies. The work of repairing so great a destruction of muscle is nature's chief concern. Since you became the mighty hunter that you are, the wear and tear have been enormous, and the necessary rapidity of reconstruction has absorbed your rich vitality.

I will not question the wisdom of your choice, if there has been any deliberate choice, though perhaps the life of action that you lead may have grown rather out of circumstances determining habit than from any conscious resolution. Health is so much more necessary to happiness than culture, that few who could choose between them would sacrifice it for learning, unless they were impelled by irresistible instincts. And beyond the great delight of health and strength there is a restlessness in men born to be active which must have its outlet in activity. I knew a brave Italian who had followed

The active life.

A brave Italian.

Garibaldi in all his romantic enterprises, who had suffered from privation and from wounds, who had not only faced heath in the wildest adventures, but, what is even more terrible to the active temperament, had risked health from frequent exposure; and when I asked him whether it was affection to his famous chief, or faith in a political creed, or some more personal motive that had led him to this scorn of prudence, he answered that, after honest self-examination, he believed the most powerful motive to be the passion for an active life. The active temperament likes physical action for its own sake, and not as a means of health. Activity renews itself and claims larger and larger satisfaction, till at last the habit of it absorbs the whole energy of the man.

Need of action.

Want of interest in exercise.

Although such a life as yours would be incompatible with the work I have to do, it would be an unmixed benefit to me to take a greater interest in exercise. If you could but communicate that interest, how willingly would I become your pupil! The fatal law of the studious temperament is, that in exercise itself it must find some intellectual charm, so that we quit our books in the library only to go and read the infinite book of nature. We cannot go out in the country without incessantly thinking about either botany, or geology, or landscape painting, and it is difficulty for us to find a refuge from the importunate habit of investigation. Sport is the only refuge, but the difficulty is to care about it sufficiently to avoid *ennui*. When you have not the natural instinct, how are you to supply its place by any make-believe excitement? There is no position in the world more wearisome than that of a man inwardly indifferent to the amusement in which he is trying to take part. *You* can watch for game with an invincible patience,

Sport.

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for you have the natural instinct, but after the first ten minutes on the skirts of the wood I lay my gun down and begin to botanize. Last week a friendly neighbour invited me to a boar-hunt. The boar was supposed to be in the middle of a great impenetrable plantation, and all I did during the whole morning was to sit in my saddle awaiting the exit of the beast, cantering from one point of the wood's circumference to another, as the cry of the dogs guided me. Was it pleasure? A true hunter would have found interest enough in expectation, but I felt like a man on a railway-platform who is waiting for a train that is late.

Waiting for a wild boar.

LETTER V.

LETTER V.

TO A STUDENT WHO NEGLECTED BODILY EXERCISE.

Difficulty of conciliating the animal and the intellectual lives—Bodily activity sometimes preserved by an effort of the will—Necessity of faith in exercise—Incompatibility between physical and intellectual living disappears in large spaces of time—Franklin's theory about concentration in exercise—Time an essential factor—Health of a rural postman—Pedestrian habits of Wordsworth—Pedestian and equestrian habits of Sir Walter Scott—Goethe's wild delight in physical exercise—Alexander Humboldt combated early delicacy by exercise—Intellectual utilities of physical action.

"We have done those things which we ought not to have done; we have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and there is no health in us."

How applicable, my dear brother, are these words which the Church, in her wisdom, has seen to be adapted to all sinners—how applicable, I say, are they to students most especially! They have quite a personal applica-

bility to you and me. We have read all day long, and written till three o'clock in the morning; we have taken no exercise for weeks, and there is no health in us. The doctor scrutinizes our wearied eyes, and knows that our brains are weary. Little do we need his warnings, for does not Nature herself remind us of our disobedience, and tell us, in language not to be misinterpreted, to amend the error of our ways? Our digestion is sluggish and imperfect; we are as nervous as delicate ladies, and there is no health in us.

The two lives.

How easy it is to follow one of the two lives—the animal or the intellectual! how difficult to conciliate the two! In every one of us there exists an animal which might have been as vigorous as wolves and foxes, if it had been left to develop itself in freedom. But besides the animal, there existed also a mind, and the mental activity restrained the bodily activity, till at last there is a serious danger of putting an end to it altogether.

Bodily activity preserved.

I know two men, about fifty-five years old both of them, and both of them admirably active. They tell me that their bodily activity has been preserved by an effort of the will; that if they had not resolutely kept up the habit of using legs and arms in daily work or amusement their limbs would have stiffened into uselessness, and their constitutions would have been unable to bear the call of any sudden emergency. One of them has four residences in different parts of the same county, and yet he will not keep a carriage, but is a pedestrian terrible to his friends; the other is at the head of a great business, and gives an example of physical activity to his work-people. Both have an absolute faith in habitual exercise; and both affirm that if the habit were once broken they could never afterwards resume it.

PART I. LETTER V.

Faith in exercise.

We need this faith in exercise—this firm conviction of its necessity—the sort of conviction that makes a man go out in all weathers, and leave the most urgent intellectual labour for the mere discipline and hardening of the body. Few students possess this faith in its purity. It is hard to believe that we shall get any good from exercise proportionate to the sacrifice of time.

Conciliation between body and mind.

The incompatibility between the physical and the intellectual lives is often very marked if you look at small spaces of time only; but if you consider broader spaces, such as a lifetime, then the incompatibility is not so marked, and gives place to a manifest conciliation. The brain is clearer in vigorous health than it can be in the gloom and misery of sickness; and although health may last for a while without renewal from exercise, so that if you are working under pressure for a month the time given to exercise is so much deducted from the result, it is not so for the life's performance. Health sustained for many years is so useful to the realization of all considerable intellectual undertakings, that the sacrifice to the bodily well-being is the best of all possible investments.

Franklin's theory of exercise.

Franklin's theory about concentrating his exercise for the economy of time was founded upon a mistake. Violent exertion for minutes is *not* equivalent to moderate exercise for hours. The desire to concentrate good of various kinds into the smallest possible space is one of the commonest of *human* wishes, but it is not encouraged by the broader economy of nature. In the exercise of the mind every teacher is well aware that time is an essential factor. It is necessary to *live* with a study for hundreds or thousands of hours before the mind can assimilate as much of the subject as it may need; and so it is necessary to live in exercise during a thousand

Time is needed.

hours of every year to make sure of the physical benefits. Even the fresh air itself requires time to renovate our blood. The fresh air cannot be concentrated; and to breathe the prodigious quantities of it which are needed for perfect energy, we must be out in it frequently and long. *Fresh air.*

The inhabitants of great cities have recourse to gymnastics as a substitute for the sports of the country. These exercises have one advantage—they can be directed scientifically so as to strengthen the limbs that need development; but no city gymnasium can offer the invigorating breezes of the mountain. We require not only exercise but exposure—daily exposure to the health-giving inclemencies of the weather. The postman who brings my letters walks eight thousand miles a year, and enjoys the most perfect regularity of health. There are operatives in factories who go through quite as much bodily exertion, but they have not his fine condition. He is as merry as a lark, and announces himself every morning like a bearer of joyful tidings. What the postman does from necessity an old gentleman did as regularly, though more moderately, for the preservation of his health and faculties. He went out every day; and as he never consulted the weather, so he never had to consult the physicians. *Gymnastics.* *Exposure.* *A postman.*

Nothing in the habits of Wordsworth—that model of excellent habits—can be better as an example to men of letters than his love of pedestrian excursions. Wherever he happened to be, he explored the whole neighbourhood on foot, looking into every nook and cranny of it; and not merely the immediate neighbourhood, but extended tracts of country; and in this way he met with much of his best material. Scott was both a pedestrian and an equestrian traveller, having often, as he tells us, *Wordsworth's pedestrian habits.* *Scott.*

Goethe's delight in exercise.

walked thirty miles or ridden a hundred in those rich and beautiful districts which afterwards proved to him such a mine of literary wealth. Goethe took a wild delight in all sorts of physical exercise—swimming in the Ilm by moonlight, skating with the merry little Weimar court on the Schwansee, riding about the country on horseback, and becoming at times quite outrageous in the rich exuberance of his energy. Alexander Humboldt was delicate in his youth, but the longing for great enterprises made him dread the hindrances of physical insufficiency, so he accustomed his body to exercise and fatigue, and prepared himself for those wonderful explorations which opened his great career. Here are intellectual lives which were forwarded in their special aims by habits of physical exercise; and, in an earlier age, have we not also the example of the greatest intellect of a great epoch, the astonishing Leonardo da Vinci, who took such a delight in horsemanship that although, as Vasari tells us, poverty visited him often, he never could sell his horses or dismiss his grooms?

Humboldt.

Leonardo da Vinci.

Intellectual uses of action.

The physical and intellectual lives are not incompatible. I may go farther, and affirm that the physical activity of men eminent in literature has added abundance to their material and energy to their style; that the activity of scientific men has led them to innumerable discoveries; and that even the more sensitive and contemplative study of the fine arts has been carried to a higher perfection by artists who painted action in which they had had their part, or natural beauty which they had travelled far to see. Even philosophy itself owes much to mere physical courage and endurance. How much that is noblest in ancient thinking may be due to the hardy health of Socrates!

LETTER VI.

TO AN AUTHOR IN MORTAL DISEASE.

Considering death as a certainty—The wisdom learned from suffering—Employment of happier intervals—The teaching of the diseased not to be rejected—Their double experience—Ignorance of Nature's spoiled children—Benefit of disinterested thought—Reasons for pursuing intellectual labours to the last—Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire.

Bixio on his death-bed

WHEN Alexandre Bixio lay on his death-bed, his friend Labrousse visited him, and exclaimed on entering the room, "How well you are looking to-day!" To this, Bixio, who was clearly aware of his condition, answered in these words:—"Voyons, mon pauvre Labrousse; tu viens voir un homme qui n'a plus qu'un quart d'heure à vivre, et tu veux lui faire croire qu'il a bonne mine; allons, une poignée de main, cela vaut mieux pour un homme que tous ces petits mensonges-là."

I will vex you with none of these well-meant but wearisome little falsehoods. We both of us know your state; we both know that your malady, though it may be alleviated, can never be cured; and that the fatal termination of it, though delayed by all the artifices of science, will certainly arrive at last. The cheerful courage which enables you to look this certainty in the face has also enabled you to extract from years of suffering that profoundest wisdom which (as one of the wisest of living Englishmen has told us) can be learned from suffering alone. The admirable elasticity of your intellectual and moral nature has enabled you, in the intervals of physical uneasiness or pain, to cast aside every morbid thought, to enter quite fully and heartily into the healthy life of others, and to enjoy the magnificent spectacle of the

Wisdom learned from suffering.

PART I. LETTER VI.

Effects of disease on a noble mind.

universe with contented submission to its laws—those beneficent yet relentless laws which to you bring debility and death. You have continued to write notwithstanding the progress of your malady; and yet, since it has so pitilessly held you, there is no other change in the spirit of your compositions than the deepening of a graver beauty, the addition of a sweeter seriousness. Not one sentence that you have written betrays either the injustice of the invalid, or his irritability. Your mind is not clouded by any mist from the fever marshes, but its sympathies are far more active than they were. Your pain has taught you a tender pity for all the pain that is outside of you, and a patient gentleness which was wanting to your nature in its days of barbarian health.

Surely it would be a lamentable error if mankind were to carry out the recommendation of certain ruthless philosophers, and reject the help and the teaching of the diseased. Without undervaluing the robust performance of healthy natures, and without encouraging literature that is morbid, that is fevered, impatient, and perverse, we may still prize the noble teaching which is the testament of sufferers to the world. The diseased have a peculiar and mysterious experience; they have known the sensations of health, and then, in addition to this knowledge, they have gained another knowledge which enables them to think more accurately even of health itself. A life without suffering would be like a picture without shade. The pets of Nature, who do not know what suffering is, and cannot realize it, have always a certain rawness, like foolish landsmen who laugh at the terrors of the ocean, because they have neither experience enough to know what those terrors are, nor brains enough to imagine them

Experience of the sick.

You who are borne along, slowly but irresistibly, to that Niagara which plunges into the gulf of death,—you who, with perfect self-possession and heroic cheerfulness, are counting the last miles of the voyage,—find leisure to study and think as the boat glides onwards silently to the inevitable end. It is one of the happiest privileges of the high intellectual life that it can elevate us—at least in the intervals of relief from complete prostration or acute pain—to regions of disinterested thought, where all personal anxieties are forgotten. To feel that he is still able, even in days of physical weakness and decline, to add something to the world's inheritance of knowledge, or to bequeath to it some new and noble thought in the pearl of complete expression, is a profound satisfaction to the active mind that is lodged in a perishing body. Many diseases fortunately permit this activity to the last; and I do not hesitate to affirm, that the work done in the time of physical decline has in not a few instances been the most perfect and the most permanently valuable. It is not accurately true that the mind and the body invariably fail together. Physicians who know how prevalent chronic diseases are, and how many eminent men are physically inconvenienced by them, know also that minds of great spiritual energy possess the wonderful faculty of indefinitely improving themselves whilst the body steadily deteriorates. Nor is there anything irrational in this persistent improvement of the mind, even to the extremest limit of material decay; for the mind of every intellectual human being is part and parcel of the great permanent mind of humanity; and even if its influence soon ceases to be traceable—if the spoken words are forgotten—if the written volume is not reprinted or even quoted, it has not worked in vain. The

A privilege of the intellectual.

Work in physical decline.

PART I. LETTER VI.

The nameless workers.

intellectual light of Europe in this century is not only due to great luminaries whom everyone can name, but to millions of thoughtful persons, now utterly forgotten, who in their time loved the light, and guarded it, and increased it, and carried it into many lands, and bequeathed it as a sacred trust. He who labours only for his personal pleasure may well be discouraged by the shortness and uncertainty of life, and cease from his selfish toil on the first approaches of disease; but whoever has fully realized the grand continuity of intellectual tradition, and taken his own place in it between the future and the past, will work till he can work no more, and then gaze hopefully on the world's great future, like Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, when his blind eyes beheld the future of zoology.

LETTER VII.

LETTER VII.

TO A YOUNG MAN OF BRILLIANT ABILITY, WHO HAD JUST TAKEN HIS DEGREE.

A domestic picture—Thoughts suggested by it—Importance of the senses in intellectual pursuits—Importance of hearing to Madame de Stael—Importance of seeing to Mr. Ruskin—Mr. Prescott, the historian—How blindness retarded his work—Value of all the five senses—Self-government indispensable to their perfection—Great value of longevity to the intellectual life.

IT is always a great pleasure to me to pass an evening at your father's house; but on the last occasion that pleasure was very much enhanced because you were once more with us. I watched your mother's eyes as she sat in her place in the drawing-room. They followed you almost without ceasing, and there was the sweetest, happiest expression on her dear face, that betrayed her tender

A domestic scene.

maternal love for you and her legitimate maternal pride. Your father was equally happy in his own way; he was much more gay and talkative than I have seen him for two or three anxious years; he told amusing stories; he entered playfully into the jests of others; he had pleasant projects for the future, and spoke of them with facetious exaggeration. I sat quietly in my corner, slily observing my old friends, and amusing myself by discovering (it did not need much perspicacity for that) the hidden sources of the happiness that was so clearly visible. They were gladdened by the first successes of your manhood; by the evidence of your strength; by the realization of hopes long cherished.

Watching this charming picture with a perfect sympathy, I began to have certain thoughts of my own which it is my present purpose to communicate to you without disguise. I thought, first, how agreeable it was to be the spectator of so pretty a picture; but then my eyes wandered to a painting that hung upon the walls, in which also there were a mother and her son, and this led me a long way. The painting was a hundred years old; but although the colours were not quite so fresh as when they left the palette of the artist, the beautiful youth who stood radiant like a young Apollo in the centre of the composition had not lost one of the great gifts with which his cunning human creator had endowed him. The fire of his eye had not been quenched by time; the bloom of his cheek still flushed with faint vermilion; his lip was full and imperious; his limbs athletic; his bearing haughty and dauntless. All life seemed spread before him like a beautiful rich estate of which every acre was his own. How easily will he conquer fame! how easily kindle passion! Who shall withstand this pink and

A painting.

PART I. LETTER VII.

perfection of aristocracy—this ideal of the age of fine gentlemen, with all the gifts of nature helped by all the inventions of art?

Then I thought farther: "That splendid young nobleman in the picture will look just as young as he does now when we shall be either superannuated or dead." And I looked at you and your mother again and thought: "It is just five minutes since I saw these two living beings, and in this little space of time they have both of them aged a little, though no human observer has enough delicacy of perception to detect so inappreciable an alteration." I went gradually on and on into the future, trying to imagine the changes which would come over yourself more especially (for it was you who were the centre of my reverie), till at last I imagined pretty accurately what you might be at sixty; but there it became necessary to stop, because it was too difficult to conceive the processes of decay.

Subtle changes of time.

After this, one thought grew upon me and became dominant. I thought, at present he has all the senses in their perfection, and they serve him without a hitch. He is an intelligence served by organs, and the organs are all doing their duty as faithfully as a postman who brings letters. When the postman becomes too infirm to do his work he will retire on his little pension, and another will take his place and bring the letters just as regularly; but when the human organs become infirm they cannot be taken out and replaced by new ones, so that we must content ourselves, to the end, with their service, such as it may be. Then I reflected how useful the senses are to the high intellectual life, and how wise it is, even for intellectual purposes, to preserve them as long as possible in their perfection.

Perfection of the senses.

To be able to see and hear well—to feel healthy sensations—even to taste and smell properly, are most important qualifications for the pursuit of literature, and art, and science. If you read attentively the work of any truly illustrious poet, you will find that the whole of the imagery which gives power and splendour to his verse is derived from nature through one or other of these ordinary channels. Some philosophers have gone much farther than this, and have affirmed that the entire intellectual life is based ultimately upon remembered physical sensations; that we have no mental conception that is really independent of sensuous experience; and that the most abstract thought is only removed from sensation by successive processes of substitution. I have not space to enter into so great and mysterious a subject as this; but I desire to draw your attention to a truth very commonly overlooked by intellectual people, which is the enormous importance of the organs of sense in the highest intellectual pursuits. I will couple together two names which have owed their celebrity, one chiefly to the use of her ears, the other to the use of his eyes. Madame de Stael obtained her literary material almost exclusively by means of conversation. She directed, systematically, the talk of the learned and brilliant men amongst whom she lived to the subject which for the moment happened to occupy her thoughts. Her literary process (which is known to us in detail through the revelations of her friends) was purposely invented to catch everything that she heard, as a net catches fish in a river. First, she threw down on paper a very brief rough draft of the intended literary project. This she showed to few, but from it she made a second "state" (as an engraver would say), which she exhibited to some of her trusted friends, profiting by their hints

Intellectual utility of the senses

Hearing in the case of Madame de Stael.

Her literary process.

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and suggestions. Her secretary copied the corrected manuscript, incorporating the new matter, on paper with a very broad margin for farther additions. During all the time that it took to carry her work through these successive states, that ingenious woman made the best possible use of her ears, which were her natural providers. She made everybody talk who was likely to be of any use to her, and then immediately added what she had caught on the wide margin reserved for that purpose. She used her eyes so little that she might almost as well have been blind. We have it on her own authority, that were it not out of respect to custom, she would not open her window to see the Bay of Naples for the first time, whereas she would travel five hundred leagues to talk with a clever man whom she had never met.

How little she used her eyes.

Now since Madame de Stael's genius fed itself exclusively through the faculty of hearing, what an enormous difference it would have made to her if she had been deaf! It is probable that the whole of her literary reputation was dependent on the condition of her ears. Even a very moderate degree of deafness (just enough to make listening irksome) might have kept her in perpetual obscurity.

Ruskin.

The next instance I intend to give is that of a distinguished contemporary, Mr. Ruskin. His peculiar position in literature is due to his being able to see as cultivated artists see. Everything that is best and most original in his writings is invariably either an account of what he has seen in his own independent inimitable way, or else a criticism of the accurate or defective sight of others. His method of study, by drawing and taking written memoranda of what he has seen, is entirely different from Madame de Stael's method, but refers always,

His use of sight.

as hers did, to the testimony of the predominant sense. Everyone whose attention has been attracted to the subject is aware that, amongst people who are commonly supposed to see equally well, and who are not suspected of any tendency to blindness, the degrees of perfection in this sense vary to infinity. Suppose that Mr. Ruskin (to our great misfortune) had been endowed with no better eyes than many persons who see fairly well in the ordinary sense, his enjoyment and use of sight would have been so much diminished that he would have had little enthusiasm about seeing, and yet that kind of enthusiasm was quite essential to his work.

Prescott, the historian.

The well-known instance of Mr. Prescott, the historian, is no doubt a striking proof what *may* be accomplished by a man of remarkable intellectual ability without the help of sight, or rather helped by the sight of others. We have also heard of a blind traveller, and even of a blind entomologist; but in all cases of this kind there are executive difficulties to be overcome, such that only the most resolute natures would ever dream of encountering them. When the materials for the "Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella" arrived in Prescott's house from Europe, his remaining eye had just suffered from over-exertion to such a degree that he could not use it again for years. "I well remember," he wrote in a letter to a friend, "the blank despair which I felt when my literary treasures arrived, and I saw the mine of wealth lying around me which I was forbidden to explore." And although, by a most tedious process, which would have worn out the patience of any other author, Mr. Prescott did at last arrive at the conclusion of his work, it cost him ten years of labour—probably thrice as much time as would

have been needed by an author of equal intellectual ability without any infirmity of sight.

Although, of the five senses which God has given us, sight and hearing are the most necessary to the intellectual life, it may easily be demonstrated that the lower ones are not without their intellectual uses. Perfect literature and art can only be produced by men who are perfect in all their natural faculties. The great creative intellects have never been ascetics; they have been rightly and healthily sensitive to every kind of pleasure.

Taste and smell.

The taste of fruits and wines, the perfume of flowers, are a part of the means by which the spirit of Nature influences our most secret thoughts, and conveys to us suggestions, or carries us into states of feeling which have an enormous effect upon our thinking, though the manner in which the effect is produced is one of the deepest mysteries of our mysterious being. When the Caliph Vathek added five wings to the palace of Alkoremmi, on the hill of Pied Horses, for the particular gratification of each of his five senses, he only did on a uselessly large scale what every properly-endowed human being does, when he can afford it, on a small one.

The five senses.

You will not suspect me of preaching unlimited indulgence. The very object of this letter is to recommend, for intellectual purposes, the careful preservation of the senses in the freshness of their perfection, and this is altogether incompatible with every species of excess. If you are to see clearly all your life, you must not sacrifice eyesight by overstraining it; and the same law of moderation is the condition of preserving every other faculty. I want you to know the exquisite taste of common dry bread; to enjoy the perfume of a larch wood at a dis-

Evils of excess.

tance; to feel delight when a sea-wave dashes over you. I want your eye to be so sensitive that it shall discern the faintest tones of a grey cloud, and yet so strong that it shall bear to gaze on a white one in the dazzling glory of sunshine. I would have your hearing sharp enough to detect the music of the spheres, if it were but audible, and yet your nervous system robust enough to endure the shock of the guns on an ironclad. To have and keep these powers we need a firmness of self-government that is rare.

Sensitiveness and strength.

Young men are careless of longevity; but how precious are added years to the fulness of the intellectual life! There are lives, such as that of Major Pendennis, which only diminish in value as they advance—when the man of fashion is no longer fashionable, and the sportsman can no longer stride over the ploughed fields. The old age of the Major Pendennises is assuredly not to be envied; but how rich is the age of the Humboldts! I compare the life of the intellectual to a long wedge of gold—the thin end of it begins at birth, and the depth and value of it go on indefinitely increasing till at last comes Death (a personage for whom Nathaniel Hawthorne had a peculiar dislike, for his unmannerly habit of interruption), who stops the auriferous processes. Oh the mystery of the nameless ones who have died when the wedge was thin and looked so poor and light! Oh the happiness of the fortunate old men whose thoughts went deeper and deeper like a wall that runs out into the sea!

Value of longevity.

NOTE.—One of the most painful cases of interruption caused by death is that of Cuvier. His paralysis came upon him whilst he was still in full activity, and death prevented him from arranging a great accumulation of scientific material. He said to M. Pasquier, "I had

Cuvier.

great things still to do; all was ready in my head. After thirty years of labour and research, there remained but to write, and now the hands fail, and carry with them the head." But the most lamentable instances of this kind of interruption are, from the nature of things, unknown to us. Even the friends of the deceased cannot estimate the extent of the loss, for a man's immediate neighbours are generally the very last persons to become aware of the nature of his powers or the value of his acquirements.

PART II.

THE MORAL BASIS.

LETTER I.

TO A MORALIST WHO HAD SAID THAT THERE WAS A WANT OF MORAL FIBRE IN THE INTELLECTUAL, ESPECIALLY IN POETS AND ARTISTS.

The love of intellectual pleasure—The seeking for a stimulus—Intoxication of poetry and oratory—Other mental intoxications—The Bishop of Exeter on drudgery—The labour of composition in poetry—Wordsworth's dread of it—Moore—His trouble with "Lalla Rookh"—His painstaking in preparation—Necessity of patient industry in other arts—John Lewis, Meissonier, Mulready—Drudgery in struggling against technical difficulties—Water-colour painting, etching, oil-painting, fresco, line-engraving—Labour undergone for mere discipline—Moral strength of students—Giordano Bruno.

The love of pleasure.

You told me the other day that you believed the inducement to what I called intellectual living to be merely the love of pleasure—pleasure of a higher kind, no doubt, than that which we derive from wine, yet fairly comparable to it. You went on to say that you could not, from the moral point of view, discern any appreciable difference between intoxicating oneself by means of literature or

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art and getting tipsy on port wine or brandy; that the reading of poetry, most especially, was clearly self-intoxication—a service of Venus and Bacchus, in which the suggestions of artfully-ordered words were used as substitutes for the harem and the wine-flask. Completing the expression of this idea, you said that the excitement produced by oratory was exactly of the same nature as the excitement produced by gin, so that Mr. Bright and M. Gambetta—nay, even a gentleman so respectable as the late Lord Derby—belonged strictly to the same profession as the publicans, being dealers in stimulants, and no more. The habitual student was, in your view, nothing better than the helpless victim of unresisted appetite, to whom intellectual intoxication, having been at first a pleasure, had finally become a necessity. You added that any rational person who found himself sinking into such a deplorable condition as this, would have recourse to some severe discipline as a preservative—a discipline requiring close attention to common things, and rigorously excluding every variety of thought which could possibly be considered intellectual.

Excitement of oratory.

Mental stimulants.

It is strictly true that the three intellectual pursuits—literature, science, and the fine arts—are all of them strong stimulants, and that men are attracted to them by the stimulus they give. But these occupations are morally much nearer to the common level of other occupations than you suppose. There is no doubt a certain intoxication in poetry and painting; but I have seen a tradesman find a fully equivalent intoxication in an addition of figures showing a delightful balance at his banker's. I have seen a young poet intoxicated with the love of poetry; but I have also seen a young mechanical genius on whom the sight of a locomotive acted exactly

like a bottle of champagne. Everything that is capable of exciting or moving man, everything that fires him with enthusiasm, everything that sustains his energies above the dead level of merely animal existence, may be compared, and not very untruly, to the action of generous wine. The two most powerful mental stimulants—since they overcome even the fear of death—are unquestionably religion and patriotism: ardent states of feeling both of them when they are genuine; yet this ardour has a great utility. It enables men to bear much, to perform much which would be beyond their natural force if it were not sustained by powerful mental stimulants. And so it is in the intellectual life. It is because its labours are so severe that its pleasures are so glorious. The Creator of intellectual man set him the most arduous tasks—tasks that required the utmost possible patience, courage, self-discipline, and which at the same time were for the most part, from their very nature, likely to receive only the most meagre and precarious pecuniary reward. Therefore, in order that so poor and weak a creature might execute its gigantic works with the energy necessary to their permanence, the labour itself was made intensely attractive and interesting to the few who were fitted for it by their constitution. Since their courage could not be maintained by any of the common motives which carry men through ordinary drudgery—since neither wealth nor worldly position was in their prospects, the drudgery they had to go through was to be rewarded by the triumphs of scientific discovery, by the felicities of artistic expression. A divine drunkenness was given to them for their encouragement, surpassing the gift of the grape.

The most powerful stimulants

Arduous tasks.

Their reward

But now that I have acknowledged, not ungratefully,

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LETTER I.

the necessity of that noble excitement which is the life of life, it is time for me to add that, in the daily labour of all intellectual workers, much has to be done which requires a robustness of the moral constitution beyond what you appear to be aware of. It is not long since the present Bishop of Exeter truly affirmed, in an address to a body of students, that if there were not weariness in work, that work was not so thorough-going as it ought to be. "Of all work," the Bishop said, "that produces results, nine-tenths must be drudgery. There is no work, from the highest to the lowest, which can be done well by any man who is unwilling to make that sacrifice. Part of the very nobility of the devotion of the true workman to his work consists in the fact that a man is not daunted by finding that drudgery must be done; and no man can really succeed in any walk of life without a good deal of what in ordinary English is called pluck. That is the condition of all work whatever, and it is the condition of all success. And there is nothing which so truly repays itself as this very perseverance against weariness."

Drudgery.

You understand, no doubt, that there is drudgery in the work of a lawyer or an accountant, but you imagine that there is no drudgery in that of an artist, or author, or man of science. In these cases you fancy that there is nothing but a pleasant intoxication, like the puffing of tobacco or the sipping of claret after dinner. The Bishop sees more accurately. He knows that "of *all* work that produces results nine-tenths must be drudgery." He makes no exceptions in favour of the arts and sciences; if he had made any such exceptions, they would have proved the absence of culture in himself. Real work of all descriptions, even including the composition of poetry

Artists and authors.

(the most intoxicating of all human pursuits), contains drudgery in so large a proportion that considerable moral courage is necessary to carry it to a successful issue. Some of the most popular writers of verse have dreaded the labour of composition. Wordsworth shrank from it much more sensitively than he did from his prosaic labours as a distributor of stamps. He had that *horreur de la plume* which is a frequent malady amongst literary men. But we feel, in reading Wordsworth, that composition was a serious toil to him—the drudgery is often visible. Let me take, then, the case of a writer of verse distinguished especially for fluency and ease —the lightest, gayest, apparently most thoughtless of modern minstrels—the author of "The Irish Melodies" and "Lalla Rookh." Moore said—I quote from memory, and may not give the precise words, but they were to this effect—that although the first shadowy imagining of a new poem was a delicious fool's paradise, the labour of actual composition was something altogether different. He did not, I believe, exactly use the word "drudgery," but his expression implied that there was painful drudgery in the work. When he began to write "Lalla Rookh" the task was anything but easy to him. He said that he was "at all times a far more slow and painstaking workman than would ever be guessed from the result." For a long time after the conclusion of the agreement with Messrs. Longman, "though generally at work with a view to this task, he made but very little real progress in it." After many unsatisfactory attempts, finding that his subjects were so slow in kindling his own sympathies, he began to despair of their ever touching the hearts of others. "Had this series of disheartening experiments been carried on much further, I must have thrown aside the work

Poets.

Words-worth.

Moore.

Lalla Rookh.

PART II. LETTER I.

Moore's self-preparation.

in despair." He took the greatest pains in long and laboriously preparing himself by reading. "To form a storehouse, as it were, of illustrations purely Oriental, and so familiarize myself with its various treasures that, quick as Fancy required the aid of fact in her spiritings, the memory was ready to furnish materials for the spell-work; such was, for a long while, the sole object of my studies." After quoting some opinions favourable to the truth of his Oriental colouring, he says: "Whatever of vanity there may be in citing such tributes, they show, at least, of what great value, even in poetry, is that prosaic quality, industry, since it was in a slow and laborious collection of small facts that the first foundations of this fanciful romance were laid."

Submission to discipline.

Other fine arts make equally large claims upon the industry of their professors. We see the charming result, which looks as if it were nothing but pleasure—the mere sensuous gratification of an appetite for melody or colour; but no one ever eminently succeeded in music or painting without patient submission to a discipline far from attractive or entertaining. An idea was very prevalent amongst the upper classes in England, between twenty and thirty years ago, that art was not a serious pursuit, and that Frenchmen were too frivolous to apply themselves seriously to anything. When, however, the different schools of art in Europe came to be exhibited together, the truth began to dawn upon people's minds that the French and Belgian schools of painting had a certain superiority over the rest—a superiority of quite a peculiar sort; and when the critics applied themselves to discover the hidden causes of this generally-perceived superiority, they found out that it was due in great measure to the patient drudgery submitted to by those foreign artists in their

Foreign artists.

youth. English painters who have attained distinction have gone through a like drudgery, if not in the public *atelier* at least in secrecy and solitude. Mr. John Lewis, in reply to an application for a drawing to be reproduced by the autotype process, and published in the *Portfolio*, said that his sketches and studies were all in colour, but if we liked to examine them we were welcome to select anything that might be successfully photographed. Not being in London at the time, I charged an experienced friend to go and see if there were anything that would answer our purpose. Soon afterwards he wrote: "I have just been to see John Lewis, and have come away *astounded*." He had seen the vast foundations of private industry on which the artist's public work had been erected,—innumerable studies in colour, wrought with the most perfect care and finish, and all for self-education merely, not for any direct reward in fame. We have all admired the extraordinary power of representation in the little pictures of Meissonier; that power was acquired by painting studies *life-size* for self-instruction, and the artist has sustained his knowledge by persistence in that practice. Mulready, between the conception of a new picture and the execution of it, used to give himself a special training for the intended work by painting a study in colour of every separate thing that was to form part of the composition. It is useless to go on multiplying these examples, since all great artists, without exception, have been distinguished for their firm faith in steady well-directed labour. This faith was so strong in Reynolds that it limited his reasoning powers, and prevented him from assigning their due importance to the inborn natural gifts.

John Lewis

His private studies

Meissonier.

Mulready

Not only in their preparations for work, but even in

PART II. LETTER I.

Work of artists.

the work itself, do artists undergo drudgery. It is the peculiarity of their work that, more than any other human work, it displays whatever there may be in it of pleasure and felicity, putting the drudgery as much out of sight as possible; but all who know the secrets of the studio are aware of the ceaseless struggles against technical difficulty which are the price of the charms that pleasantly deceive us. The amateur tries to paint in water-colour, and finds that the gradation of his sky will not come right; instead of being a sound gradation like that of the heavenly blue, it is all in spots and patches. Then he goes to some clever artist who seems to get the right thing with enviable ease. "Is my paper good? have my colours been properly ground?" The materials are sound enough, but the artist confesses one of the discouraging little secrets of his craft. "The fact is," he says, "those spots that you complain of happen to all of us, and very troublesome they are, especially in dark tints; the only way is to remove them as patiently as we can, and it sometimes takes several days. If one or two of them remain in spite of us, we turn them into birds." In etching, the most famous practitioners get into messes with the treacherous chemistry of their acids, and need an invincible patience. Even Méryon was always very anxious when the time came for confiding his work to what he called the *traîtresse liqueur;* and whenever I give a commission to an etcher, I am always expecting some such despatch as the following: "Plate utterly ruined in the biting. Very sorry. Will begin another immediately." We know what a dreadful series of mishaps attended our fresco-painters at Westminster, and now even the promising water-glass process, in which Maclise trusted, shows the bloom of premature decay.

Technical troubles.

In water colour.

In etching.

In fresco.

The safest and best known of modern processes, simple oil-painting, has its own dangers also. The colours sink and alter; they lose their relative values; they lose their pearly purity, their glowing transparence—they turn to buff and black. The fine arts bristle all over with technical difficulties, and are, I will not say the best school of patience in the world, for many other pursuits are also very good schools of patience; but I will say, without much fear of contradiction from anybody acquainted with the subject, that the fine arts offer drudgery enough, and disappointment enough, to be a training both in patience and in humility.

The fine arts a school of patience.

In the labour of the line-engraver both these qualities are developed to the pitch of perfect heroism. He sits down to a great surface of steel or copper, and day by day, week after week, month after month, ploughs slowly his marvellous lines. Sometimes the picture before him is an agreeable companion; he is in sympathy with the painter; he enjoys every touch that he has to translate. But sometimes, on the contrary, he hates the picture, and engraves it as a professional duty. I happened to call upon a distinguished English engraver—a man of the greatest taste and knowledge, a refined and cultivated critic—and I found him seated at work before a thing which had nothing to do with fine art—a medley of ugly portraits of temperance celebrities on a platform. "Ah!" he said to me sadly, "you see the dark side of our profession; fancy sitting down to a desk all day long for two years together with that thing to occupy your thoughts!" How much moral fibre was needed to carry to a successful issue so repulsive a task as that! You may answer that a stone-breaker on the roadside surpasses my line-engraver both in patience and in humility;

Line-engravers.

Dark side of their profession.

PART II. LETTER I.

but whereas the sensitiveness of the stone-breaker has been deadened by his mode of life, the sensitiveness of the engraver has been continually fostered and increased. An ugly picture was torture to his cultivated eye, and he had to bear the torture all day long, like the pain of an irritating disease.

Consolations.

Still even the line-engraver has secret sources of entertainment to relieve the mortal tedium of his task-work. The picture may be hideous, but the engraver has hidden consolations in the exercise of his wonderful art. He can at least entertain himself with feats of interpretative skill, with the gentle treacheries of improving here and there upon the hatefulness of the intolerable original. He may congratulate himself in the evening, that one more frightful hat or coat has been got rid of; that the tiresome task has been reduced by a space measurable in eighths of an inch. The heaviest work which shows progress is not without *one* element of cheerfulness.

Work done for discipline alone.

There is a great deal of intellectual labour, undergone simply for discipline, which shows no present result that is appreciable, and which therefore requires, in addition to patience and humility, one of the noblest of the moral virtues, faith. Of all the toils in which men engage, none are nobler in their origin or their aim than those by which they endeavour to become more wise. Pray observe that whenever the desire for greater wisdom is earnest enough to sustain men in these high endeavours, there must be both humility and faith—the humility which acknowledges present insufficiency, the faith that relies upon the mysterious laws which govern our intellectual being. Be sure that there has been great moral strength in all who have come to intellectual greatness. During some brief moments of insight the mist has rolled away, and

they have beheld, like a celestial city, the home of their highest aspirations; but the cloud has gathered round them again, and still in the gloom they have gone steadily forwards, stumbling often, yet maintaining their unconquerable resolution. It is to this sublime persistence of the intellectual in other ages that the world owes the treasures which they won; it is by a like persistence that we may hope to hand them down, augmented, to the future. Their intellectual purposes did not weaken their moral nature, but exercised and exalted it. All that was best and highest in the imperfect moral nature of Giordano Bruno had its source in that noble passion for Philosophy, which made him declare that for her sake it was easy to endure labour and pain and exile, since he had found "in brevi labore diuturnam requiem, in levi dolore immensum gaudium, in angusto exilio patriam amplissimam."

Persistence.

Giordano Bruno.

LETTER II.

TO AN UNDISCIPLINED WRITER.

Early indocility of great workers—External discipline only a substitute for inward discipline—Necessity for inward discipline—Origin of the idea of discipline—Authors peculiarly liable to overlook its uses—Good examples—Sir Arthur Helps—Sainte-Beuve—The central authority in the mind—Locke's opinion—Even the creative faculty may be commanded—Charles Baudelaire—Discipline in common trades and professions—Lawyers and surgeons—Haller—Mental refusals not to be altogether disregarded—The idea of discipline the moral basis of the intellectual life—Alexander Humboldt.

Sir Arthur Helps, in that wise book of his, "Thoughts upon Government," says that "much of the best and

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Indocility of clever boys.

greatest work in the world has been done by those who were anything but docile in their youth." He believes that "this bold statement applies not only to the greatest men in Science, Literature, and Art, but also to the greatest men in official life, in diplomacy, and in the general business of the world."

Many of us who were remarkable for our indocility in boyhood, and remarkable for nothing else, have found much consolation in this passage. It is most agreeable to be told, by a writer very eminent both for wisdom and for culture, that our untowardness was a hopeful sign. Another popular modern writer has also encouraged us by giving a long list of dunces who have become illustrious.

Yet, however flattering it may be to find ourselves in such excellent company, at least so far as the earlier half of life may be concerned, we cannot quite forget the very numerous instances of distinguished persons who began by submitting to the discipline of school and college, and gained honours and reputation there, before encountering the competition of the world.

School discipline

a substitute for inward discipline.

The external discipline applied by schoolmasters is a substitute for that inward discipline which we all so greatly need, and which is absolutely indispensable to culture. Whether a boy happens to be a dunce at school or a youth of brilliant promise, his future intellectual career will depend very much on his moral force. The distinguished men who derived so little benefit from early discipline have invariably subjected themselves to a discipline of another kind which prepared them for the labour of their manhood. It may be a pure assumption to say this, but the assumption is confirmed by every instance that is known to me. Many eminent men have

undergone the discipline of business, many like Franklin have been self-disciplined, but I have never heard of a person who had risen to intellectual eminence without voluntary submission to an intellectual discipline of some kind.

Pleasure the support of discipline.

There are, no doubt, great pleasures attached to the intellectual life, and quite peculiar to it; but these pleasures are the support of discipline and not its negation. They give us the cheerfulness necessary for our work, but they do not excuse us from the work. They are like the cup of coffee served to a soldier on duty, not like the opium which incapacitates for everything but dreaming.

I have been led into these observations by a perusal of the new book which you sent me. It has many qualities which in a young writer are full of promise. It is earnest, and lively, and exuberant, but at the same time it is undisciplined.

Examples

Now I believe it may be affirmed, that although there has been much literature in former ages which was both vigorous and undisciplined, still when an age presents, as ours does, living examples of perfect intellectual discipline, whoever falls below them in this respect contents himself with the very kind of inferiority which of all inferiorities is the easiest to avoid. You cannot, by an effort of the will, hope to rival the brilliance of a genius, but you may quite reasonably expect to obtain as complete a control over your own faculties and your own work as any other highly-cultivated person.

Origin of discipline.

The origin of discipline is the desire to do not merely our best with the degree of power and knowledge which at the time we do actually happen to possess, but with that which we *might* possess if we submitted to the necessary training. The powers given to us by Nature

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are little more than a power to become, and this becoming is always conditional on some sort of exercise—what sort we have to discover for ourselves.

Good workmanship in literature.

No class of persons are so liable to overlook the uses of discipline as authors are. Anybody can write a book, though few can write that which deserves the name of literature. There are great technical differences between literature and book-making, but few can clearly explain these differences, or detect, in their own case, the absence of the necessary qualities. In painting, the most perfect finish is recognized at a glance, but the mind only can perceive it in the book. It was an odd notion of the authorities to exhibit literature in the international exhibitions; but if they could have made people see the difference between sound and unsound workmanship in the literary craft, they would have rendered a great service to the higher intellectual discipline. Sir Arthur Helps might have served as an example to English writers, because he has certain qualities in which we are grievously deficient. He can say a thing in the words that are most fit and necessary, and then leave it. Sainte-Beuve would have been another admirable example of self-discipline, especially to Frenchmen, who would do well to imitate him in his horror of the *à peu près*. He never began to write about anything until he had cleared the ground well before him. He never spoke about any character or doctrine that he had not bottomed (to use Locke's word) as far as he was able. He had an extraordinary aptitude for collecting exactly the sort of material that he needed, for arranging and classifying material, for perceiving its mutual relations. Very few Frenchmen have had Sainte-Beuve's intense repugnance to insufficiency of information and inaccuracy of lan-

Helps.

Sainte-Beuve.

guage. Few indeed are the French journalists of whom it might be said, as it may be truly said of Sainte-Beuve, that he never wrote even an article for a newspaper without having subjected his mind to a special training for that particular article. The preparations for one of his *Lundis* were the serious occupation of several laborious days; and before beginning the actual composition, his mind had been disciplined into a state of the most complete readiness, like the fingers of a musician who has been practising a piece before he executes it.

Preparation

The object of intellectual discipline is the establishment of a strong central authority in the mind by which all its powers are regulated and directed as the military forces of a nation are directed by the strategist who arranges the operations of a war. The presence of this strong central authority is made manifest in the unity and proportion of the results; when this authority is absent (it is frequently entirely absent from the minds of undisciplined persons, especially of the female sex), you have a chaos of complete confusion; when the authority without being absent is not strong enough to regulate the lively activity of the intellectual forces, you have too much energy in one direction, too little in another, a brigade where a regiment could have done the work, and light artillery where you want guns of the heaviest calibre.

the central authority.

To establish this central authority it is only necessary, in any vigorous and sound mind, to exercise it. Without such a central power there is neither liberty of action nor security of possession. "The mind," says Locke, "should always be free and ready to turn itself to the variety of objects that occur, and allow them as much consideration as shall, for that time, be thought fit. To be engrossed so

Its exercise.

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Locke.

by one subject as not to be prevailed on to leave it for another that we judge fitter for our contemplation, is to make it of no use to us. Did this state of mind always remain so, everyone would, without scruple, give it the name of perfect madness; and whilst it does last, at whatever intervals it returns, such a rotation of thoughts about the same object no more carries us forwards towards the attainment of knowledge, than getting upon a mill-horse whilst he jogs on his circular track, would carry a man on a journey."

Creative faculty obedient.

Writers of imaginative literature have found in practice that even the creative faculty might be commanded. Charles Baudelaire, who had the poetical organization with all its worst inconveniences, said nevertheless that "inspiration is decidedly the sister of daily labour.

Baudelaire.

These two contraries do not exclude each other more than all the other contraries which constitute nature. Inspiration obeys like hunger, like digestion, like sleep. There is, no doubt, in the mind a sort of celestial mechanism, of which we need not be ashamed, but we ought to make the best use of it. If we will only live in a resolute contemplation of next day's work, the daily labour will serve inspiration." In cases where discipline is felt to be very difficult, it is generally at the same time felt to be very

George Sand.

desirable. George Sand complains that although "to overcome the indiscipline of her brain, she had imposed upon herself a regular way of living, and a daily labour, still twenty times out of thirty she catches herself reading or dreaming, or writing something entirely apart from the work in hand." She adds that without this frequent intellectual *flânerie*, she would have acquired information which has been her perpetual but unrealized desire.

It is the triumph of discipline to overcome both small

and great repugnances. We bring ourselves, by its help, to face petty details that are wearisome, and heavy tasks that are almost appalling. Nothing shows the power of discipline more than the application of the mind in the common trades and professions to subjects which have hardly any interest in themselves. Lawyers are especially admirable for this. They acquire the faculty of resolutely applying their minds to the driest documents, with tenacity enough to end in the perfect mastery of their contents; a feat which is utterly beyond the capacity of any undisciplined intellect, however gifted by Nature. In the case of lawyers there are frequent intellectual repugnances to be overcome; but surgeons and other men of science have to vanquish a class of repugnances even less within the power of the will—the instinctive physical repugnances. These are often so strong as to seem apparently insurmountable, but they yield to persevering discipline. Although Haller surpassed his contemporaries in anatomy, and published several important anatomical works, he was troubled at the outset with a horror of dissection beyond what is usual with the inexperienced, and it was only by firm self-discipline that he became an anatomist at all.

Discipline in trades and professions.

Lawyers.

Surgeons.

Haller.

There is, however, one reserve to be made about discipline, which is this: We ought not to disregard altogether the mind's preferences and refusals, because in most cases they are the indication of our natural powers. They are not so always; many have felt attracted to pursuits for which they had no capacity (this happens continually in literature and the fine arts), whilst others have greatly distinguished themselves in careers which were not of their own choosing, and for which they felt no vocation in their youth. Still there exists a certain

The mind's refusals.

relation between preference and capacity, which may often safely be relied upon when there are not extrinsic circumstances to attract men or repel them. Discipline becomes an evil, and a very serious evil, causing immense losses of special talents to the community, when it overrides the personal preferences entirely. We are less in danger of this evil, however, from the discipline which we impose upon ourselves than from that which is imposed upon us by the opinion of the society in which we live. The intellectual life has this remarkable peculiarity as to discipline, that whilst very severe discipline is indispensable to it, that which it really needs is the obedience to an inward law, an obedience which is not only compatible with revolt against other people's notions of what the intellectual man ought to think and do, but which often directly leads to such revolt as its own inevitable result.

Opinion of society.

In the attempt to subject ourselves to the inward law, we may encounter a class of mental refusals which indicate no congenital incapacity, but prove that the mind has been incapacitated by its acquired habits and its ordinary occupations. I think that it is particularly important to pay attention to this class of mental refusals, and to give them the fullest consideration. Suppose the case of a man who has a fine natural capacity for painting, but whose time has been taken up by some profession which has formed in him mental habits entirely different from the mental habits of an artist. The inborn capacity for art might whisper to this man, "What if you were to abandon your profession and turn painter?" But to this suggestion of the inborn capacity the acquired unfitness would, in a man of sense, most probably reply, "No; painting is an art bristling all over with the most

Inward refusals.

alarming technical difficulties, which I am too lazy to overcome; let younger men attack them if they like." Here is a mental refusal of a kind which the severest self-disciplinarian ought to listen to. This is Nature's way of keeping us to our specialities; she protects us by means of what superficial moralists condemn as one of the minor vices—the disinclination to trouble ourselves without necessity, when the work involves the acquisition of new habits.

Variety of discipline.

The moral basis of the intellectual life appears to be the idea of discipline; but the discipline is of a very peculiar kind, and varies with every individual. People of original power have to discover the original discipline that they need. They pass their lives in thoughtfully altering this private rule of conduct as their needs alter, as the legislature of a progressive State makes unceasing alterations in its laws. When we look back upon the years that are gone, this is our bitterest regret, that whilst the precious time, the irrecoverable, was passing by so rapidly, we were intellectually too undisciplined to make the best personal use of all the opportunities that it brought. Those men may be truly esteemed happy and fortunate who can say to themselves in the evening of their days—"I had so prepared myself for every successive enterprise, that when the time came for it to be carried into execution my training ensured success."

Preparation.

I had thought of some examples, and there are several great men who have left us noble examples of self-discipline; but, in the range and completeness of that discipline, in the foresight to discern what would be wanted, in the humility to perceive that it was wanting, in the resolution that it should *not* be wanting when the time came that such knowledge or faculty should be

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Humboldt.

called for, one colossal figure so far excels all others that I cannot write down their names with that of Alexander Humboldt. The world sees the intellectual greatness of such a man, but does not see the substantial moral basis on which the towering structure rose. When I think of his noble dissatisfaction with what he knew; his ceaseless eagerness to know more, and know it better; of the rare combination of teachableness that despised no help (for he accepted without jealousy the aid of everybody who could assist him), with self-reliance that kept him always calm and observant in the midst of personal danger, I know not which is the more magnificent spectacle, the splendour of the intellectual light, or the beauty and solidity of the moral constitution that sustained it.

LETTER III.

LETTER III.

TO A FRIEND WHO SUGGESTED THE SPECULATION "WHICH OF THE MORAL VIRTUES WAS MOST ESSENTIAL TO THE INTELLECTUAL LIFE."

The most essential virtue is disinterestedness—The other virtues possessed by the opponents of intellectual liberty—The Ultramontane party—Difficulty of thinking disinterestedly even about the affairs of another nation—English newspapers do not write disinterestedly about foreign affairs—Difficulty of disinterestedness in recent history—Poets and their readers feel it—Fine subjects for poetry in recent events not yet available—Even history of past times rarely disinterested—Advantages of the study of the dead languages in this respect—Physicians do not trust their own judgment about their personal health—The virtue consists in endeavouring to be disinterested.

Disinterestedness.

I THINK there cannot be a doubt that the most essential virtue is disinterestedness.

Let me tell you, after this decided answer, what are the considerations which have led me to it. I began by taking the other important virtues one by one—industry, perseverance, courage, discipline, humility, and the rest; and then asked myself whether any class of persons possessed and cultivated these virtues who were nevertheless opposed to intellectual liberty. The answer came immediately, that there have in every age been men deservedly respected for these virtues who did all in their power to repress the free action of the intellect. What is called the Ultramontane party in the present day includes great numbers of talented adherents who are most industrious, most persevering, who willingly submit to the severest discipline—who are learned, self-denying, and humble enough to accept the most obscure and ill-requited duties. Some of these men possess nine-tenths of the qualifications that are necessary to the highest intellectual life—they have brilliant gifts of nature; they are well-educated; they take a delight in the exercise of noble faculties, and yet instead of employing their time and talents to help the intellectual advancement of mankind, they do all in their power to retard it. They have many most respectable virtues, but one is wanting. They have industry, perseverance, discipline, but they have *not* disinterestedness.

Virtues.

The Ultramonta

One virtue wanting.

I do not mean disinterestedness in its ordinary sense as the absence of selfish care about money. The Church of Rome has thousands of devoted servants who are content to labour in her cause for stipends so miserable that it is clear they have no selfish aim; whilst they abandon all those possibilities of fortune which exist for every active and enterprising layman. But their

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thinking can never be disinterested so long as their ruling motive is devotion to the interests of their Church. Some of them are personally known to me, and we have discussed together many of the greatest questions which agitate the continental nations at the present time. They have plenty of intellectual acumen; but whenever the discussion touches, however remotely, the ecclesiastical interests that are dear to them, they cease to be observers—they become passionate advocates. It is this habit of advocacy which debars them from all elevated speculation about the future of the human race, and which so often induces them to take a side with incapable and retrograde governments, too willingly overlooking their deficiencies in the expectation of services to the cause. Their predecessors have impeded, as far as they were able, the early growth of science—not for intellectual reasons, but because they instinctively felt that there was something in the scientific spirit not favourable to those interests which they placed far above the knowledge of mere matter.

Habit of advocacy.

I have selected the Ultramontane party in the Church of Rome as the most prominent example of a party eminent for many intellectual virtues, and yet opposed to the intellectual life from its own want of disinterestedness. But the same defect exists, to some degree, in every partisan—exists in you and me so far as we are partisans. Let us suppose, for example, that we desired to find out the truth about a question much agitated in a neighbouring country at the present time—the question whether it would be better for that country to attempt the restoration of its ancient Monarchy or to try to consolidate a Republican form of government. How difficult it is to think out such a problem disinterestedly, and yet how

Partisans.

necessary to the justice of our conclusions that we should think disinterestedly if we pretend to think at all! It is true that we have one circumstance in our favour—we are not French subjects, and this is much. Still we are not disinterested, since we know that the settlement of a great political problem such as this, even though on foreign soil, cannot fail to have a powerful influence on opinion in our own country, and consequently upon the institutions of our native land. We are spectators only, it is true; but we are far from being disinterested spectators. And if you desire to measure the exact degree to which we are interested in the result, you need only look at the newspapers. The English newspapers always treat French affairs from the standpoint of their own party. The Conservative journalist in England is a Monarchist in France, and has no hopes for the Republic; the Liberal journalist in England believes that the French dynasties are used up, and sees no chance of tranquillity outside of republican institutions. In both cases there is an impediment to the intellectual appreciation of the problem.

Interested spectators

Journalists.

This difficulty is so strongly felt by those who write and read the sort of literature which aspires to permanence, and which, therefore, ought to have a substantial intellectual basis, that either our distinguished poets choose their subjects in actions long past and half forgotten, or else, when tempted by present excitement, they produce work which is artistically far inferior to their best. Our own generation has witnessed three remarkable events which are poetical in the highest degree. The conquest of the Two Sicilies by Garibaldi is a most perfect subject for a heroic poem; the events which led to the execution of the Emperor Maximilian

Subjects for poems.

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Recent subjects for poems.

and deprived his Empress of reason, would, in the hands of a great dramatist, afford the finest possible material for a tragedy; the invasion of France by the Germans, the overthrow of Napoleon III., the siege of Paris, are an epic ready to hand that only awaits its Homer; yet, with the exception of Victor Hugo, who is far gone in intellectual decadence, no great poet has sung of these things yet. The subjects are as good as can be, but too near. Neither poet nor reader is disinterested enough for the intellectual enjoyment of these subjects: the poet would not see his way clearly, the reader would not follow unreservedly.

Historians.

It may be added, however, in this connection, that even past history is hardly ever written disinterestedly. Historians write with one eye on the past and the other on the pre-occupations of the present. So far as they do this they fall short of the intellectual standard. An ideally perfect history would tell the pure truth, and all the truth, so far as it was ascertainable.

Artists.

Artists are seldom good critics of art, because their own practice biasses them, and they are not disinterested. The few artists who have written soundly about art have succeeded in the difficult task of detaching saying from doing; they have, in fact, become two distinct persons, each oblivious of the other.

Dead languages.

The strongest of all the reasons in favour of the study of the dead languages and the literatures preserved in them, has always appeared to me to consist in the more perfect disinterestedness with which we moderns can approach them. The men and events are separated from us by so wide an interval, not only of time and locality, but especially of modes of thought, that our passions are not often enlisted, and the intellect is sufficiently free.

Medical men.

It may be noted that medical men, who are a scientific class, and therefore more than commonly aware of the great importance of disinterestedness in intellectual action, never trust their own judgment when they feel the approaches of disease. They know that it is difficult for a man, however learned in medicine, to arrive at accurate conclusions about the state of a human body that concerns him so nearly as his own, even although the person who suffers has the advantage of actually experiencing the morbid sensations.

The virtue of trying to be disinterested.

To all this you may answer that intellectual disinterestedness seems more an accident of situation than a virtue. The virtue is not to have it, but to seek it in all earnestness; to be ready to accept the truth even when it is most unfavourable to ourselves. I can illustrate my meaning by a reference to a matter of every-day experience. There are people who cannot bear to look into their own accounts from a dread that the clear revelation of figures may be less agreeable to them than the illusions which they cherish. There are others who possess a kind of virtue which enables them to see their own affairs as clearly as if they had no personal interest in them. The weakness of the first is one of the most fatal of intellectual weaknesses; the mental independence of the second is one of the most desirable of intellectual qualities. The endeavour to attain it, or to strengthen it, is a great virtue, and of all the virtues the one most indispensable to the nobility of the intellectual life.

Honesty.

NOTE.—The reader may feel some surprise that I have not mentioned honesty as an important intellectual virtue. Honesty is of great importance, no doubt, but it appears to be (as to practical effects) included in disinterestedness, and to be less comprehensively useful. There is no reason to suspect the honesty of many political

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and theological partisans, yet their honesty does not preserve them from the worst intellectual habits, such as the habit of "begging the question," of misrepresenting the arguments on the opposite side, of shutting their eyes to every fact which is not perfectly agreeable to them. The truth is, that mere honesty, though a most respectable and necessary virtue, goes a very little way towards the forming of an effective intellectual character. It is valuable rather in the relations of the intellectual man to the outer world around him, and even here it is dangerous unless tempered by discretion. A perfect disinterestedness would ensure the best effects of honesty, and yet avoid some serious evils, against which honesty is not, in itself, a safeguard.

LETTER IV.

LETTER IV.

TO A MORALIST WHO SAID THAT INTELLECTUAL CULTURE WAS NOT CONDUCIVE TO SEXUAL MORALITY.

That the Author does not write in the spirit of advocacy—Two different kinds of immorality—Byron and Shelley—A peculiar temptation for the intellectual—A distinguished foreign writer—Reaction to coarseness from over-refinement—Danger of intellectual excesses—Moral utility of culture—The most cultivated classes at the same time the most moral—That men of high intellectual aims have an especially strong reason for morality—M. Taine's opinion.

The Author not polemical.

A CRITIC in one of the quarterlies once treated me as a feeble defender of my opinions, because I gave due consideration to both sides of a question. He said that, like a wise commander, I capitulated beforehand in case my arguments did not come up for my relief; nay, more, that I gave up my arms in unconditional surrender. To this let me answer, that I have nothing to do with the polemical method, that I do not look upon an opponent as an enemy to be repelled, but as a torch-bearer to be welcomed for any light that he may bring; that I

defend nothing, but try to explore everything that lies near enough.

Immorality of the intellectual.

You need not expect me, therefore, to defend very vigorously the morality of the intellectual life. An advocate could do it brilliantly; there are plenty of materials, but so clumsy an advocate as your present correspondent would damage the best of causes by unseasonable indiscretions. So I begin by admitting that your accusations are most of them well founded. Many intellectual people have led immoral lives, others have led lives which, although in strict conformity to their own theories of morality, were in opposition to the morality of their country and their age. Byron is a good instance of the first, and Shelley of the second. Byron was really and knowingly immoral; Shelley, on the other hand, hated what he considered to be immorality, and lived a life as nearly as possible in accordance with the moral ideal in his own conscience; still he did not respect the moral rule of his country, but lived with Mary Godwin, whilst Harriet, his first wife, was still alive. There is a clear distinction between the two cases; yet both have the defect that the person takes in hand the regulation of his own morality, which it is hardly safe for anyone to do, considering the prodigious force of passion.

Byron

Shelley,

A distinction.

A peculiar temptation

I find even in the lives of intellectual people a peculiar temptation to immorality from which others are exempt. It is in their nature to feel an eager desire for intellectual companionship, and yet at the same time to exhaust very rapidly whatever is congenial to them in the intellect of their friends. They feel a strong intellectual attraction to persons of the opposite sex; and the idea of living with a person whose conversation is believed at the time to promise an increasing interest, is attractive in ways of

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A foreign writer.

which those who have no such wants can scarcely form a conception. A most distinguished foreign writer, of the female sex, has made a succession of domestic arrangements which, if generally imitated by others, would be subversive of any conceivable system of morality; and yet it is clear in this case that the temptation was chiefly, if not entirely, intellectual. The successive companions of this remarkable woman were all of them men of exceptional intellectual power, and her motive for changing them was an unbridled intellectual curiosity.

Danger of these changes.

This is the sort of immorality to which cultivated people are most exposed. It is dangerous to the well-being of a community because it destroys the sense of security on which the idea of the family is founded. If we are to leave our wives when their conversation ceases to be interesting, the foundations of the home will be unsafe. If they are to abandon us when we are dull, to go away with some livelier and more talkative companion, can we ever hope to retain them permanently?

Reaction from over-refinement

There is another danger which must be looked fairly in the face. When the lives of men are refined beyond the real needs of their organization, Nature is very apt to bring about the most extraordinary reactions. Thus the most exquisitely delicate artists in literature and painting have frequently had reactions of incredible coarseness. Within the Châteaubriand of Atala there existed an obscene Châteaubriand that would burst forth occasionally in talk that no biographer could repeat. I have heard the same thing of the sentimental Lamartine. We know that Turner, dreamer of enchanted landscapes, took the pleasures of a sailor on the spree. A friend said to me of one of the most exquisite living geniuses: "You can have no conception of the coarseness of his

tastes; he associates with the very lowest women, and enjoys their rough brutality."

These cases only prove, what I have always willingly admitted, that the intellectual life is not free from certain dangers if we lead it too exclusively. Intellectual excesses, by the excitement which they communicate to the whole system, have a direct tendency to drive men into other excesses, and a too great refinement in one direction may produce degrading reactions in another. Still the cultivation of the mind, reasonably pursued, is, on the whole, decidedly favourable to morality; and we may easily understand that it should be so, when we remember that people have recourse to sensual indulgences simply from a desire for excitement, whilst intellectual pursuits supply excitement of a more innocent kind and in the utmost variety and abundance. If, instead of taking a few individual instances, you broadly observe whole classes, you will recognize the moral utility of culture. The most cultivated classes in our own country are also the most moral, and these classes have advanced in morality at the same time that they have advanced in culture. English gentlemen of the present day are superior to their forefathers whom Fielding described; they are better educated, and they read more; they are at the same time both more sober and more chaste.

Excesses and reactions

Culture still favourable to morality.

English gentlemen.

I may add that intellectual men have peculiar and most powerful reasons for avoiding the excesses of immorality, reasons which to anyone who has a noble ambition are quite enough to encourage him in self-control. Those excesses are the gradual self-destruction of the intellectual forces, for they weaken the spring of the mind, not leaving it will enough to face the drudgery that is inevitable in every career. Even in cases where

Reasons for morality.

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they do not immediately lead to visible imbecility, they make the man less efficient and less capable than he might have been; and all experienced wrestlers with fate and fortune know well that success has often, at the critical time, depended upon some very trifling advantage which the slightest diminution of power would have lost to them. No one knows the full immensity of the difference between having power enough to make a little headway against obstacles, and just falling short of the power which is necessary at the time. In every great intellectual career there are situations like that of a steamer with a storm-wind directly against her and an iron-bound coast behind. If the engines are strong enough to gain an inch an hour she is safe, but if they lose there is no hope. Intellectual successes are so rewarding that they are worth any sacrifice of pleasure; the sense of defeat is so humiliating that fair Venus herself could not offer a consolation for it. An ambitious man will govern himself for the sake of his ambition, and withstand the seductions of the senses. Can he be ever strong enough, can his brain ever be lucid enough for the immensity of the task before him?

Importance of small advantages.

Self-government for ambition.

Effects of immorality.

"Le jeune homme," says M. Taine, "ignore qu'il n'y a pas de pire déperdition de forces, que de tels commerces abaissent le cœur, qu'après dix ans d'une vie pareille il aura perdu la moitié de sa volonté, que ses pensées auront un arrière-goût habituel d'amertume et de tristesse, que son ressort intérieur sera amolli ou faussé. Il s'excuse à ses propres yeux, en se disant qu'un homme doit tout toucher pour tout connaître. De fait, il apprend la vie, mais bien souvent aussi il perd l'énergie, la chaleur d'âme, la capacité d'agir, et à trente ans il n'est plus bon qu'à faire un employé, un dilettante, ou un rentier."

PART III.

OF EDUCATION.

LETTER I.

TO A FRIEND WHO RECOMMENDED THE AUTHOR TO LEARN THIS THING AND THAT.

Lesson learned from a cook—The ingredients of knowledge—Importance of proportion in the ingredients—Case of an English author—Two landscape painters—The unity and charm of character often dependent upon the limitations of culture—The burden of knowledge may diminish the energy of action—Difficulty of suggesting a safe rule for the selection of our knowledge—Men qualified for their work by ignorance as well as by knowledge—Men remarkable for the extent of their studies—Franz Wœpke—Goethe—Hebrew proverb.

I HAPPENED one day to converse with an excellent French cook about the delicate art which he professed, and he comprised the whole of it under two heads—the knowledge of the mutual influences of ingredients, and the judicious management of heat. It struck me that there existed a very close analogy between cookery and education; and, on following out the subject in my own way, I found that what he told me suggested several considerations of the very highest importance in the culture of the human intellect.

Cookery and education.

PART III. LETTER I.

A French dish.

Amongst the dishes for which my friend had a deserved reputation was a certain *gâteau de foie* which had a very exquisite flavour. The principal ingredient, not in quantity but in power, was the liver of a fowl; but there were several other ingredients also, and amongst these a leaf or two of parsley. He told me that the influence of the parsley was a good illustration of his theory about his art. If the parsley were omitted, the flavour he aimed at was not produced at all; but, on the other hand, if the quantity of parsley was in the least excessive, then the *gâteau* instead of being a delicacy for *gourmets* became an uneatable mess. Perceiving that I was really interested in the subject, he kindly promised a practical evidence of his doctrine, and the next day intentionally spoiled his dish by a trifling addition of parsley. He had not exaggerated the consequences; the delicate flavour entirely departed, and left a nauseous bitterness in its place, like the remembrance of an ill-spent youth.

How it was spoiled.

And so it is, I thought, with the different ingredients of knowledge which are so eagerly and indiscriminately recommended. We are told that we ought to learn this thing and that, as if every new ingredient did not affect the whole flavour of the mind. There is a sort of intellectual chemistry which is quite as marvellous as material chemistry, and a thousand times more difficult to observe. One general truth may, however, be relied upon as surely and permanently our own. It is true that everything we learn affects the *whole* character of the mind.

Mental chemistry.

Consider how incalculably important becomes the question of proportion in our knowledge, and how that which we are is dependent as much upon our ignorance

as our science. What we call ignorance is only a smaller proportion—what we call science only a larger. The larger quantity is recommended as an unquestionable good, but the goodness of it is entirely dependent on the mental product that we want. Aristocracies have always instinctively felt this, and have decided that a gentleman ought not to know too much of certain arts and sciences. The character which they had accepted as their ideal would have been destroyed by indiscriminate additions to those ingredients of which long experience had fixed the exact proportions. The same feeling is strong in the various professions: there is an apprehension that the disproportionate knowledge may destroy the professional nature. The less intelligent members of the profession will tell you that they dread an unprofessional use of time; but the more thoughtful are not so apprehensive about hours and days, *they* dread that sure transformation of the whole intellect which follows every increase of knowledge.

Proportion in knowledge.

Professional feeling.

I knew an English author who by great care and labour had succeeded in forming a style which harmonized quite perfectly with the character of his thinking, and served as an unfailing means of communication with his readers. Everyone recognized its simple ease and charm, and he might have gone on writing with that enviable facility had he not determined to study Locke's philosophical compositions. Shortly afterwards my friend's style suddenly lost its grace; he began to write with difficulty, and what he wrote was unpleasantly difficult to read. Even the thinking was no longer his own thinking. Having been in too close communication with a writer who was not a literary artist, his own art had deteriorated in consequence.

Effect of reading.

PART III. LETTER I.

Two Landscape painters.

I could mention an English landscape painter who diminished the pictorial excellence of his works by taking too much interest in geology. His landscapes became geological illustrations, and no longer held together pictorially. Another landscape painter, who began by taking a healthy delight in the beauty of natural scenery, became morbidly religious after an illness, and thenceforth passed by the loveliest European scenery as comparatively unworthy of his attention, to go and make ugly pictures of places that had sacred associations.

Unproductive characters.

For people who produce nothing these risks appear to be less serious; and yet there have been admirable characters, not productive, whose admirableness might have been lessened by the addition of certain kinds of learning. The last generation of the English country aristocracy was particularly rich in characters whose unity and charm was dependent upon the limitations of their culture, and which would have been entirely altered, perhaps not for the better, by simply knowing a science or a literature that was closed to them.

Abundant illustrations might be collected in evidence of the well-known truth that the burden of knowledge may diminish the energy of action; but this is rather outside of what we are considering, which is the influence of knowledge upon the intellectual and not the active life.

I regret very much not to be able to suggest anything like a safe rule for the selection of our knowledge. The most rational one which has been hit upon as yet appears to be a simple confidence in the feeling that we inwardly want to know. If I feel the inward want for a certain kind of knowledge, it may perhaps be presumed that it would be good for me; but even this feeling is

not perfectly reliable, since people are often curious about things that do not closely concern them, whilst they neglect what it is most important for them to ascertain. All that I venture to insist upon is, that we cannot learn any new thing without changing our whole intellectual composition as a chemical compound is changed by another ingredient; that the mere addition of knowledge may be good for us or bad for us; and that whether it will be good or bad is usually a more obscure problem than the enthusiasm of educators will allow. That depends entirely on the work we have to do. Men are qualified for their work by knowledge, but they are also negatively qualified for it by their ignorance. Nature herself appears to take care that the workman shall not know too much—she keeps him steadily to his task; fixes him in one place mentally if not corporeally, and conquers his restlessness by fatigue. As we are bound to a little planet, and hindered by impassable gulfs of space from wandering in stars where we have no business, so we are kept by the force of circumstances to the limited studies that belong to us. If we have any kind of efficiency, very much of it is owing to our narrowness, which is favourable to a powerful individuality.

Addition of knowledge may be good or bad.

Nature keeps us to our tasks.

Sometimes, it is true, we meet with instances of men remarkable for the extent of their studies. Franz Wœpke, who died in 1864, was an extraordinary example of this kind. In the course of a short life he became, although unknown, a prodigy of various learning. His friend M. Taine says that he was erudite in many eruditions. His favourite pursuit was the history of mathematics, but as auxiliaries he had learned Arabic, and Persian, and Sanskrit. He was classically educated, he wrote and spoke the principal modern languages easily and

Franz Wœpke.

PART III. LETTER II.

you and that good Latinist, but how wide is the difference in your intellectual regimen! You have studied—well, here is a little list of what you have studied, and probably even this is not complete:—

Acquirements of a modern.

Greek, Latin, French, German, Italian, mathematics, chemistry, mineralogy, geology, botany, the theory of music, the practice of music on two instruments, much theory about painting, the practice of painting in oil and water-colour, photography, etching on copper, &c. &c. &c.

That is to say, six literatures (including English), six sciences (counting mineralogy and geology as one), and five branches or departments of the fine arts.

Omitting English literature from our total, as that may be considered to come by nature to an Englishman, though any real proficiency in it costs the leisure of years, we have here no less than sixteen different pursuits. If you like to merge the theory of music and painting in the practice of those arts, though as a branch of study the theory is really distinct, we have still fourteen pursuits, any one of which is enough to occupy the whole of one man's time. If you gave some time daily to each of these pursuits, you could scarcely give more than half an hour, even supposing that you had no professional occupation, and that you had no favourite study, absorbing time to the detriment of the rest.

Subdivision of time.

Now your grandfather, though he would be considered quite an ignorant country gentleman in these days, had in reality certain intellectual advantages over his more accomplished descendant. In the first place, he entirely escaped the sense of pressure, the feeling of not having time enough to do what he wanted to do. He accumulated his learning as quietly as a stout lady accumulates

Advantages of restriction.

her fat, by the daily satisfaction of his appetite. And at the same time that he escaped the sense of pressure, he escaped also the miserable sense of imperfection. Of course he did not know Latin like an ancient Roman, but then he never met with any ancient Romans to humiliate him by too rapid and half-intelligible conversation. He met the best Latinists of his day; and felt himself a master amongst masters. Every time he went into his study, to pass delightful hours with the noble authors that he loved, he knew that his admission into that august society would be immediate and complete. He had to wait in no antechamber of mere linguistic difficulty, but passed at once into the atmosphere of ancient thought, and breathed its delicate perfume. In this great privilege of instant admission the man of one study has always the advantage of men more variously cultivated. Their misfortune is to be perpetually waiting in antechambers, and losing time in them. Grammars and dictionaries are antechambers, bad drawing and bad colouring are antechambers, musical practice with imperfect intonation is an antechamber. And the worst is that even when a man, like yourself for instance, of very various culture, has at one time fairly penetrated beyond the antechamber, he is not sure of admittance a year hence, because in the meantime the door may have been closed against him. The rule of each separate hall or saloon of knowledge is that he alone is to be instantly admitted who calls there every day.

Instant admission

Antechambers

The man of various pursuits does not, in any case, keep them up simultaneously; he is led by inclination or compelled by necessity to give predominance to one or another. If you have fifteen different pursuits, ten of them, at any given time, will be lying by neglected.

Difficult of keeping up many pursuits.

PART III. LETTER II.

Rust.

The metaphor commonly used in reference to neglected pursuits is borrowed from the oxidation of metal; it is said that they become rusty. This metaphor is too mild to be exact. Rust on metal, even on polished steel, is easily guarded against by care, and a gun or a knife does not need to be constantly used to keep it from being pitted. The gunsmith and the cutler know how to keep these things, in great quantity, without using them at all. But no one can retain knowledge without using it. The metaphor fails still more seriously in perpetuating a false conception of the deterioration of knowledge through neglect. It is not simply a loss of polish which takes place, not a loss of mere surface-beauty, but absolute disorganization, like the disorganization of a carriage when the axle-tree is taken away. A rusty thing may still be used, but a disorganized thing cannot be used until the lost organ has been replaced. There is no equivalent, amongst ordinary material losses, to the intellectual loss that we incur by ceasing from a pursuit. But we may consider neglect as an enemy who carries away the girths from our saddles, the bits from our bridles, the oars from our boats, and one wheel from each of our carriages, leaving us indeed still nominally possessors of all these aids to locomotion, but practically in the same position as if we were entirely without them. And as an enemy counts upon the delays caused by these vexations to execute his designs whilst we are helpless, so whilst we are labouring to replace the lost parts of our knowledge the occasion slips by when we most need it. The only knowledge which is available when it is wanted is that which we habitually use. Studies which from their nature cannot be commonly used are always retained with great difficulty. The study of anatomy is perhaps

Disorganization

Effects of neglect.

Available knowledge.

Anatomy.

the best instance of this; every one who has attempted it knows with what difficulty it is kept by the memory. Anatomists say that it has to be learned and forgotten six times before it can be counted upon as a possession. This is because anatomy lies so much outside of what is needed for ordinary life that very few people are ever called upon to use it except during the hours when they are actually studying it. The few who need it every day remember it as easily as a man remembers the language of the country which he inhabits. The workmen in the establishment at Saint Aubin d'Écroville, where Dr. Auzoux manufactures his wonderful anatomical models, are as familiar with anatomy as a painter is with the colours on his palette. *They* never forget it. *Their* knowledge is never made practically valueless by some yawning hiatus, causing temporary incompetence and delay.

To have one favourite study and live in it with happy familiarity, and cultivate every portion of it diligently and lovingly, as a small yeoman proprietor cultivates his own land, this, as to study at least, is the most enviable intellectual life. But there is another side to the question which has to be considered.

Education a beginning of many things

The first difficulty for us is in our education. Modern education is a beginning of many things, and it is little more than a beginning. "My notion of educating my boy," said a rich Englishman, "is not to make him particularly clever at anything during his minority, but to make him overcome the rudimentary difficulties of many things, so that when he selects for himself his own line of culture in the future, it cannot be altogether strange to him, whatever line he may happen to select." A modern father usually allows his son to learn many things from a feeling of timidity about making a choice, if only one thing

PART III. LETTER II.

Greek education.

Alcibiades.

Education of Alcibiades.

had to be chosen. He might so easily make a wrong choice! When the inheritance of the human race was less rich, there was no embarrassment of that kind. Look at the education of an ancient Greek, at the education of one of the most celebrated Athenians, a man living in the most refined and intellectual society, himself mentally and bodily the perfect type of his splendid race, an eloquent and powerful speaker, a most capable commander both by sea and land—look at the education of the brilliant Alcibiades! When Socrates gave the list of the things that Alcibiades had learned, Alcibiades could add to it no other even nominal accomplishment, and what a meagre, short catalogue it was! "But indeed I also pretty accurately know what thou hast learned; thou wilt tell me if anything has escaped my notice. Thou hast learned then thy letters (γράμματα), to play on the cithara (κιθαρίζειν), and to wrestle (παλαίειν), for thou hast not cared to learn to play upon the flute. This is all that thou hast learned, unless something has escaped me." The γράμματα which Alcibiades had learned with a master meant reading and writing, for he expressly says later on, that as for speaking Greek, ἑλληνίζειν, he learned that of no other master than the people. An English education equivalent to that of Alcibiades would therefore consist of reading and writing, wrestling, and guitar-playing, the last accomplishment being limited to very simple music. Such an education was possible to an Athenian (though it is fair to add that Socrates does not seem to have thought much of it) because a man situated as Alcibiades was situated in the intellectual history of the world, had no past behind him which deserved his attention more than the present which surrounded him. Simply to speak Greek, ἑλληνίζειν, was really then the most precious of all accomplishments,

and the fact that Alcibiadès came by it easily does not lessen its value. Amongst a people like the Athenians, fond of intellectual talk, conversation was one of the best and readiest means of informing the mind, and certainly the very best means of developing it. It was not a slight advantage to speak the language of Socrates, and have him for a companion.

Education of ancient Romans.

The cleverest and most accomplished Romans were situated rather more like ourselves, or at least as we should be situated if we had not to learn Latin and Greek, and if there were no modern language worth studying except French. They went to Greece to perfect themselves in Greek, and improve their accent, just as our young gentlemen go to Paris or Touraine. Still, the burden of the past was comparatively light upon their shoulders. An Englishman who had attempted no more than they were bound to attempt might be a scholar, but he would not be considered so. He might be a thorough scholar in French and English,—that is, he might possess the cream of two great literatures,—but he would be spoken of as a person of defective education. It is the fashion, for example, to speak of Sir Walter Scott as a half-educated man, because he did not know much Greek, yet Sir Walter had studied German with success, and with his habit of extensive reading, and his immense memory, certainly knew incomparably more about the generations which preceded him than Horace knew of those which preceded the Augustan era.

The moderns.

Limited studies a privilege of earlier ages.

The privilege of limiting their studies, from the beginning, to one or two branches of knowledge, belonged to earlier ages, and every successive accumulation of the world's knowledge has gradually lessened it. Schoolboys in our time are expected to know more, or to have

attempted to learn more, than the most brilliant intellectual leaders of former times. What English parent, in easy circumstances, would be content that his son should have the education of Alcibiades, or an education accurately corresponding to that of Horace, or to that which sufficed for Shakespeare? Yet although the burdens laid upon the memory have been steadily augmented, its powers have not increased. Our brains are not better constituted than those of our forefathers, although where they learned one thing we attempt to learn six. They learned, and we attempt to learn. The only hope for us is to make a selection from the attempts of our too heavily burdened youth, and in those selected studies to emulate in after-life the thoroughness of our forefathers.

LETTER III.

TO A FRIEND WHO STUDIED MANY THINGS.

An idealized portrait—The scholars of the sixteenth century—Isolated students—French students of English when isolated from Englishmen—How one of them read Tennyson—Importance of sounds—Illusions of scholarship—Difficulty of appreciating the sense—That Latin may still be made a spoken language—The early education of Montaigne—A contemporary instance—Dream of a Latin island — Rapid corruption of a language taught artificially.

In your answer to my letter about the multiplicity of modern studies you tell me that my portrait of your grandfather is considerably idealized, and that, notwithstanding all the respect which you owe to his memory, you have convincing proof in his manuscript annotations

to Latin authors that his scholarship cannot have been quite so thorough as I represented it. You convey, moreover, though with perfect modesty in form, the idea that you believe your own Latin superior to your grandfather's, notwithstanding the far greater variety of your studies. Let me confess that I *did* somewhat idealize that description of your grandfather's intellectual life. I described rather a life which might have been than a life which actually was. And even this "might have been" is problematical. It may be doubted whether any modern has ever really mastered Latin. The most that can be said is that a man situated like your grandfather, without a profession, without our present temptation to scatter effort in many pursuits, and who made Latin scholarship his unique intellectual purpose, would probably go nearer to a satisfactory degree of attainment than we whose time and strength have been divided into so many fragments. But the picture of a perfect modern Latinist is purely ideal, and the prevalent notion of high attainment in a dead language is not fixed enough to be a standard, whilst if it were fixed it would certainly be a very low standard. The scholars of this century do not write Latin except as a mere exercise; they do not write books in Latin, and they never speak it at all. They do not use the language actively; they only read it, which is not really using it, but only seeing how other men have used it. There is the same difference between reading a language and writing or speaking it that there is between looking at pictures intelligently and painting them. The scholars of the sixteenth century spoke Latin habitually, and wrote it with ease and fluency. "Nicholas Grouchy," says Montaigne, "who wrote a book *de Comitiis Romanorum*; William Guerente, who has written a commentary

An idealized portrait.

Doubts.

Habits of scholars.

Scholars of the sixteenth century

PART III. LETTER III.

upon Aristotle; George Buchanan, that great Scotch poet; and Marc Anthony Muret, whom both France and Italy have acknowledged for the best orator of his time, my domestic tutors (at college), have all of them often told me that I had in my infancy that language so very fluent and ready that they were afraid to enter into discourse with me." This passage is interesting for two reasons: it shows that the scholars of that age spoke Latin; but it proves at the same time that they cannot have been really masters of the language, since they were "afraid to enter into discourse" with a clever child. Fancy an Englishman who professed to be a French scholar and yet "was afraid to enter into discourse" with a French boy, for fear he should speak too quickly! The position of these scholars relatively to Latin was in fact too isolated for it to have been possible that they should reach the point of mastery. Suppose a society of Frenchmen, in some secluded little French village where no Englishman ever penetrates, and that these Frenchmen learn English from dictionaries, and set themselves to speak English with each other, without anybody to teach them the colloquial language or its pronunciation, without ever once hearing the sound of it from English lips, what sort of English would they create amongst themselves? This is a question that I happen to be able to answer very accurately, because I have known two Frenchmen who studied English literature just as the Frenchmen of the sixteenth century studied the literature of ancient Rome. One of them, especially, had attained what would certainly in the case of a dead language be considered a very high degree of scholarship indeed. Most of our great authors were known to him, even down to the close critical comparison of

Their imperfect attainment.

Isolated students.

different readings. Aided by the most powerful memory I ever knew, he had amassed such stores that the acquisitions, even of cultivated Englishmen, would in many cases have appeared inconsiderable beside them. But he could not write or speak English in a manner tolerable to an Englishman; and although he knew nearly all the words in the language, it was dictionary knowledge, and so different from an Englishman's apprehension of the same words that it was only a sort of pseudo-English that he knew, and not our living tongue. His appreciation of our authors, especially of our poets, differed so widely from English criticism and English feeling that it was evident he did not understand them as we understand them. Two things especially proved this: he frequently mistook declamatory versification of the most mediocre quality for poetry of an elevated order; whilst, on the other hand, his ear failed to perceive the music of the musical poets, as Byron and Tennyson. How *could* he hear their music, he to whom our English sounds were all unknown? Here, for example, is the way he read "Claribel:"—

A French student of English literature.

How he read "Claribel."

"At ev ze bittle bommess
Azvart ze zeeket lon
At none ze veeld be ommess
Aboot ze most edston
At meedneeg ze mon commess
An lokez dovn alon
Ere songg ze lintveet svelless
Ze clirvoic-ed mavi dvelless
Ze fledgling srost lispess
Ze slombroos vav ootvelless
Ze babblang ronnel creespess
Ze ollov grot replee-ess
Vere Claribel lovlee-ess."

This, as nearly as I have been able to render it in English spelling, was the way in which a French gentleman of really high culture was accustomed to read English poetry to himself. Is it surprising that he should have failed to appreciate the music of our musical verse? He did not, however, seem to be aware that there existed any obstacle to the accuracy of his decisions, but gave his opinion with a good deal of authority, which might have surprised me had I not so frequently heard Latin scholars do exactly the same thing. My French friend read "Claribel" in a ridiculous manner; but English scholars all read Latin poetry in a manner not less ridiculous. You laugh to hear "Claribel" read with a foreign pronunciation, and you see at once the absurdity of affecting to judge of it as poetry before the reader has learned to pronounce the sounds; but you do not laugh to hear Latin poetry read with a foreign pronunciation, and you do not perceive that we are all of us disqualified, by our profound ignorance of the pronunciation of the ancient Romans, for any competent criticism of their verse. In all poetry, in all oratory, in much of the best and most artistic prose-writing also, sound has a great influence upon sense: a great deal is conveyed by it, especially in the way of feeling. If we do not thoroughly know and practise the right pronunciation (and by the right pronunciation I mean that which the author himself *thought in* whilst he wrote), we miss those delicate tones and cadences which are in literature like the modulations of the voice in speech. Nor can we properly appreciate the artistic choice of beautiful names for persons and places unless we know the sounds of them quite accurately, and have already in our minds the associations belonging to the sounds. Names which are selected

Latin scholars.

Ignorance of Latin sounds.

Sound and sense.

with the greatest care by our English poets, and which hold their place like jewels on the finely-wrought texture of the verse, lose all their value when they are read with a vicious foreign pronunciation. So it must be with Latin poetry when read by an Englishman, and it is probable that we are really quite insensible to the delicate art of verbal selection as it was practised by the most consummate masters of antiquity.

Choice of names.

Verbal selection.

I know that scholars think that they hear the Roman music still; but this is one of the illusions of scholarship. In each country Latin scholars have adopted a conventional style of reading, and the sounds which are in conformity with that style seem to them to be musical, whilst other than the accepted sounds seem ridiculous, and grate harshly on the unaccustomed ear. The music which the Englishman hears, or imagines that he hears, in the language of ancient Rome, is certainly not the music which the Roman authors intended to note in words. It is as if my Frenchman, having read "Claribel" in his own way, had affirmed that he heard the music of the verse. If he heard music at all, it was not Tennyson's.

Illusions of scholarship.

Permit me to add a few observations about sense. My French friend certainly understood English in a very remarkable manner for a student who had never visited our country; he knew the dictionary meaning of every word he encountered, and yet there ever remained between him and our English tongue a barrier or wall of separation, hard to define, but easy to perceive. In the true deep sense he never understood the language. He studied it, laid regular siege to it, mastered it to all appearance, yet remained, to the end, outside of it. His observations, and especially his unfavourable criticisms,

A barrier.

PART III. LETTER III.

Misapprehensions.

proved this quite conclusively. Expressions often appeared to him faulty, in which no English reader would see anything to remark upon; it may be added that (by way of compensation) he was unable to appreciate the oddity of those intentionally quaint turns of expression which are invented by the craft of humorists. It may even be doubted whether his English was of any ascertainable use to him. He might probably have come as near to an understanding of our authors by the help of translations, and he could not converse in English, for the spoken language was entirely unintelligible to him. An acquisition of this kind seems scarcely an adequate reward for the labour that it costs. Compared with living Englishmen my French friend was nowhere, but if English had been a dead language, he would have been looked up to as a very eminent scholar, and would have occupied a professor's chair in the university.

Latin might be a spoken language.

A little more life might be given to the study of Latin by making it a spoken language. Boys might be taught to speak Latin in their schooldays with the modern Roman pronunciation, which, though probably a deviation from the ancient, is certainly nearer to it than our own. If colloquial Latin were made a subject of special research, it is likely that a sufficiently rich phrase-book might be constructed from the plays. If this plan were pursued throughout Europe (always adopting the Roman pronunciation) all educated men would possess a common tongue which might be enriched to suit modern requirements without any serious departure from classical construction. The want of such a system as this was painfully felt at the council of the Vatican, where the assembled prelates discovered that their Latin was of no practical use,

Montaigne

although the Roman Catholic clergy employ Latin more habitually than any other body of men in the world. That a modern may be taught to think in Latin, is proved by the early education of Montaigne, and I may mention a much more recent instance. My brother-in-law told me that, in the spring of 1871, a friend of his had come to stay with him accompanied by his little son, a boy seven years old. This child spoke Latin with the utmost fluency, and he spoke nothing else. What I am going to suggest is a Utopian dream, but let us suppose that a hundred fathers could be found in Europe, all of this way of thinking, all resolved to submit to some inconvenience in order that their sons might speak Latin as a living language. A small island might be rented near the coast of Italy, and in that island Latin alone might be permitted. Just as the successive governments of France maintain the establishments of Sèvres and the Gobelins to keep the manufactures of porcelain and tapestry up to a recognized high standard of excellence, so this Latin island might be maintained to give more vivacity to scholarship. If there were but one little corner of ground on the wide earth where pure Latin was constantly spoken, our knowledge of the classic writers would become far more sympathetically intimate. After living in the Latin island we should think in Latin as we read, and read without translating.

A boy Latinist.

Dream of a Latin island.

But this is dreaming. It is too certain that on returning from the Latin island into the atmosphere of modern colleges an evil change would come over our young Latinists like that which came upon the young Montaigne when his father sent him to the college of Guienne, "at that time the best and most flourishing in France."

Corruption of Latin.

Montaigne tells us that, notwithstanding all his father's precautions, the place "was a college still." "My Latin," he adds, "*immediately grew corrupt, and by discontinuance I have since lost all manner of use of it.*" If it were the custom to speak Latin, it would be the custom to speak it badly; and a master of the language would have to conform to the evil usages around him. Our present state of ignorance has the charm of being silent, except when old-fashioned gentlemen in the House of Commons quote poetry which they cannot pronounce to hearers who cannot understand it.

NOTE.—An English orator quoted from Cicero the sentence "Non intelligunt homines quam magnum vectigal sit parsimonia." He made the second vowel in *vectigal* short, and the House laughed at him; he tried again and pronounced it with the long sound of the English *i*, on which the critical body he addressed was perfectly satisfied. But if a Roman had been present it is probable that, of the two, the short English *i* would have astonished his ears the less, for our short *i* does bear some resemblance to the southern *i*, whereas our long *i* resembles no single letter in any alphabet of the Latin family of languages. We are scrupulously careful to avoid what we call false quantities, we are quite utterly and ignorantly unscrupulous about false sounds. One of the best instances is the well-known "veni, vidi, vici," which we pronounce very much as if it had been written *vinai, vaidai, vaisai*, in Italian letters.

False quantities.

LETTER IV.

TO A STUDENT OF LITERATURE.

Studies, whatever they may be, always considered, by some, a waste of time—The classical languages—The higher mathematics—The accomplishments—Indirect uses of different studies—Influence of music—Studies indirectly useful to authors—What induced Mr. Roscoe to write the lives of Lorenzo de' Medici and Leo X.

Studies considered a waste of time.

WHATEVER you study, some one will consider that particular study a foolish waste of time.

If you were to abandon successively every subject of intellectual labour which had, in its turn, been condemned by some adviser as useless, the result would be simple intellectual nakedness. The classical languages, to begin with, have long been considered useless by the majority of practical people—and pray, what to shopkeepers, doctors, attorneys, artists, can be the use of the higher mathematics? And if these studies, which have been conventionally classed as serious studies, are considered unnecessary notwithstanding the tremendous authority of custom, how much the more are those studies exposed to a like contempt which belong to the category of accomplishments! What is the use of drawing, for it ends in a worthless sketch? Why should we study music when after wasting a thousand hours the amateur cannot satisfy the ear? *A quoi bon* modern languages when the accomplishment only enables us to call a waiter in French or German who is sure to answer us in English? And what, when it is not your trade, can be the good of dissecting animals or plants?

The classics

Mathematics.

Drawing.

Music.

Languages

Science.

PART III. LETTER IV.

We work for culture.

To all questionings of this kind there is but one reply. We work for culture. We work to enlarge the intelligence, and to make it a better and more effective instrument. This is our main purpose; but it may be added that even for our special labours it is always difficult to say beforehand exactly what will turn out in the end to be most useful. What, in appearance, can be more entirely outside the work of a landscape painter than the study of ancient history? and yet I can show you how an interest in ancient history might indirectly be of great service to a landscape painter. It would make him profoundly feel the human associations of many localities which to an ignorant man would be devoid of interest or meaning; and this human interest in the scenes where great events have taken place, or which have been distinguished by the habitation of illustrious men in other ages, is in fact one of the great fundamental motives of landscape painting. It has been very much questioned, especially by foreign critics, whether the interest in botany which is taken by some of the more cultivated English landscape painters is not for them a false direction and wrong employment of the mind; but a landscape painter may feel his interest in vegetation infinitely increased by the accurate knowledge of its laws, and such an increase of interest would make him work more zealously, and with less danger of weariness and *ennui*, besides being a very useful help to the memory in retaining the authentic vegetable forms. It may seem more difficult to show the possible utility of a study apparently so entirely outside of other studies as music is; and yet music has an important influence on the whole of our emotional nature, and indirectly upon expression of all kinds. He who has once learned the

History and landscape painting.

Botany.

Music.

self-control of the musician, the use of *piano* and *forte*, each in its right place, when to be lightly swift or majestically slow, and especially how to keep to the key once chosen till the right time has come for changing it; he who has once learned this knows the secret of the arts. No painter, writer, orator, who had the power and judgment of a thoroughly cultivated musician, could sin against the broad principles of taste.

Knowledge indirectly useful to authors.

More than all other men have authors reason to appreciate the indirect utilities of knowledge that is apparently irrelevant. Who can tell what knowledge will be of most use to *them?* Even the very greatest of authors are indebted to miscellaneous reading, often in several different languages, for the suggestion of their most original works, and for the light which has kindled many a shining thought of their own. And authors who seem to have less need than others of any outward help, poets whose compositions might appear to be chiefly inventive and emotional, novelists who are free from the restraints and the researches of the historian, work up what they know into what they write; so that if you could remove every line which is based on studies outside the strict limits of their art, you would blot out half their compositions. Take the antiquarian element out of Scott, and see how many of his works could never have been written. Remove from Goldsmith's brain the recollection of his wayward studies and strange experiences, and you would remove the rich material of the "Traveller" and the Essays, and mutilate even the immortal "Vicar of Wakefield." Without a classical education and foreign travel, Byron would not have composed "Childe Harold;" without the most catholic interest in the literature of all the ages, and of many

Scott.

Goldsmith

Byron.

PART III. LETTER IV.

Morris.

Roscoe.

different peoples from the North Sea to the Mediterranean, our contemporary William Morris would never have conceived, and could not have executed, that strong work "The Earthly Paradise." It may not seem necessary to learn Italian, yet Mr. Roscoe's celebrity as an author was due in the first place to his private fondness for Italian literature. He did not learn Italian in order that he might write his biographies, but he wrote about Lorenzo and Leo because he had mastered Italian, and because the language led him to take an interest in the greatest house of Florence. The way in which authors are led by their favourite studies indirectly to the great performance of their lives has never been more clearly illustrated than in this instance.

Francis Holden.

When William Roscoe was a young man he had for his friend Francis Holden, nephew of Mr. Richard Holden, a schoolmaster in Liverpool. Francis Holden was a young man of uncommon culture, having at the same time really sound scholarship in several languages, and an ardent enthusiasm for literature. He urged Roscoe to study languages, and used especially, in their evening walks together, to repeat to him passages from the noblest poets of Italy. In this way Roscoe was led to attempt Italian, and, having once begun, went on till he had mastered it. "It was in the course of these studies," says his biographer, "that he first formed the idea of writing the Life of Lorenzo de' Medici."

LETTER V.

TO A COUNTRY GENTLEMAN WHO REGRETTED THAT HIS SON HAD THE TENDENCIES OF A DILETTANT.

Inaccuracy of the common distinction between amateur pursuits and more serious studies—All of us are amateurs in many things—Prince Albert—The Emperor Napoleon III.—Contrast between general and professional education—The price of high accomplishment.

Amateurship.

I AGREE with you that amateurship, as generally practised, may be a waste of time, but the common distinction between amateur pursuits and serious studies is inconsistent. A painter whose art is imperfect and who does not work for money is called an amateur; a scholar who writes imperfect Latin, not for money, escapes the imputation of amateurship, and is called a learned man. Surely we have been blinded by custom in these things. Ideas of frivolity are attached to imperfect acquirement in certain directions, and ideas of gravity to equally imperfect acquirement in others. To write bad Latin poetry is not thought to be frivolous, but it is considered frivolous to compose imperfectly and unprofessionally in other fine arts.

Custom.

All of us are amateurs.

Yet are we not all of us amateurs in those pursuits which constituted our education—amateurs at the best, if we loved them, and even inferior to amateurs if we disliked them? We have not sounder knowledge or more perfect skill in the ancient languages than Prince Albert had in music. We know something of them, yet in comparison with perfect mastery such as that of a cultivated old Greek or Roman, our scholarship is at the

PART III. LETTER V.

best on a level with the musical scholarship of a cultivated amateur like the Prince Consort.

If the essence of dilettantism is to be contented with imperfect attainment, I fear that all educated people must be considered dilettants.

Napoleon III.

It is narrated of the Emperor Napoleon III. that in answer to some one who inquired of his Majesty whether the Prince Imperial was a musician, he replied that he discouraged dilettantism, and "did not wish his son to be a Coburg." But the Emperor himself was quite as much a dilettant as Prince Albert; though their dilettantism did not lie in the same directions. The Prince was an amateur musician and artist; the Emperor was an amateur historian, an amateur scholar, and antiquary. It may be added that Napoleon III. indulged in another and more dangerous kind of amateurship. He had a taste for amateur generalship, and the consequences of his indulgence of this taste are known to everyone.

Variety of modern education.

The variety of modern education encourages a scattered dilettantism. It is only in professional life that the energies of young men are powerfully concentrated. There is a steadying effect in thorough professional training which school education does not supply. Our boys receive praise and prizes for doing many things most imperfectly, and it is not their fault if they remain ignorant of what perfection really is, and of the immensity of the labour which it costs. I think that you would do well, perhaps, without discouraging your son too much by chillingly accurate estimates of the value of what he has done, to make him on all proper occasions feel and see the difference between half-knowledge and

Mastery.

thorough mastery. It would be a good thing for a youth to be made clearly aware how enormous a price of

labour Nature has set upon high accomplishment in everything that is really worthy of his pursuit. It is this persuasion, which men usually arrive at only in their maturity, that operates as the most effectual tranquillizer of frivolous activities.

LETTER VI.

TO THE PRINCIPAL OF A FRENCH COLLEGE.

The Author's dread of protection in intellectual pursuits—Example from the Fine Arts—Prize poems—Governmental encouragement of learning—The bad effects of it—Pet pursuits—Objection to the interference of Ministers—A project for separate examinations.

WHAT I am going to say will seem very strange to you, and is not unlikely to arouse as much professional animosity as you are capable of feeling against an old friend. You who are a dignitary of the University, and have earned your various titles in a fair field, as a soldier wins his epaulettes before the enemy, are not the likeliest person to hear with patience the unauthorized theories of an innovator. Take them, then, as mere speculations, if you will—not altogether unworthy of consideration, for they are suggested by a sincere anxiety for the best interests of learning, and yet not very dangerous to vested interests of any kind, since they can have little influence on the practice or opinion of the world.

Protection in intellectual pursuits.

I feel a great dread of what may be called *protection* in intellectual pursuits. It seems to me that when the Government of a country applies an artificial stimulus

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to certain branches of study for their encouragement, by the offer of rewards in honour or in money beyond the rewards inherent in the studies themselves, or coming naturally from their usefulness to mankind, there is a great danger that men may give a disproportionate attention to those favoured branches of study. Let me take an example from the practice of the Fine Arts. A Government, by medals and crosses, or by money, can easily create and foster a school of painting which is entirely out of relation to the century in which it exists, and quite incapable of working harmoniously with the contemporary national life. This has actually been done to a considerable extent in various countries, especially in France and in Bavaria. A sort of classicism which had scarcely any foundation in sincerity of feeling was kept up artificially by a system of encouragement which offered inducements outside the genuine ambition of an artist. The true enthusiasm which is the life of art impels the artist to express his own feeling for the delight of others. The offer of a medal or a pension induces him to make the sort of picture which is likely to satisfy the authorities. He first ascertains what is according to the rule, and then follows it as nearly as he is able. He works in a temper of simple conformity, remote indeed from the passionate enthusiasm of creation. It is so with prize poems. We all know the sort of poetry which is composed in order to gain prizes. The anxiety of the versifier is to be safe: he tries to compose what will escape censure; he dreads the originality that may give offence. But all powerful pictures and poems have been wrought in the energy of individual feeling, not in conformity to a pattern.

Medals and money for artists.

Governmental patronage.

Prize poems.

Now, suppose that, instead of encouraging poetry or

painting, a Government resolves to encourage learning. It will patronise certain pursuits to the neglect of others, or it will encourage certain pursuits more liberally than others. The subjects of such a Government will not follow learning exclusively for its delightfulness or its utility; another consideration will affect their choice. They will inquire which pursuits are rewarded by prizes in honour or money, and they will be strongly tempted to select them. Therefore, unless the Government has exercised extraordinary wisdom, men will learn what they do not really care for and may never practically want, merely in order to win some academical grade. So soon as this object has been attained, they will immediately abandon the studies by which they attained it.

Academical grades.

Can it be said that in these cases the purposes of the Government were fulfilled? Clearly not, if it desired to form a permanent taste for learning. But it may have done worse than fail in this merely negative way; it may have diverted its youth from pursuits to which Nature called them, and in which they might have effectually aided the advancement and the prosperity of the State.

Possible bad effects.

Let us suppose that a Government were to have a pet study, and offer great artificial inducements for success in it. Suppose that the pet study were entomology. All the most promising youth of the country would spend ten years in emulating Messrs. Kirby and Spence, and take their degrees as entomological bachelors. But might it not easily happen that to a majority of the young gentlemen this pursuit would have acted positively as a hindrance by keeping them from other pursuits more likely to help them in their pro-

A pet study.

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allowed to teach that one thing in the University without being required to pass an examination in any other thing.

LETTER VII.

LETTER VII.

TO THE PRINCIPAL OF A FRENCH COLLEGE.

Loss of time to acquire an ancient language too imperfectly for it to be useful—Dr. Arnold—Mature life leaves little time for culture—Modern indifference to ancient thinking—Larger experience of the moderns—The moderns older than the ancients—The Author's regret that Latin has ceased to be a living language—The shortest way to learn to read a language—The recent interest in modern languages—A French student of Hebrew.

I WAS happy to learn your opinion of the reform so recently introduced by the Minister of Public Instruction, and the more so that I was glad to find the views of so inexperienced a person as myself confirmed by your wider knowledge. You went even farther than M. Jules Simon, for you openly expressed a desire for the complete withdrawal of Greek from the ordinary school curriculum. Not that you undervalue Greek,—no one of your scholarship would be likely to undervalue a great literature,—but you thought it a loss of time to acquire a language so imperfectly that the literature still remained practically closed whilst thousands of valuable hours had been wasted on the details of grammar. The truth is, that although the principle of beginning many things in school education with the idea that the pupil will in maturer life pursue them to fuller accomplishment may in some instances be justified by the prolonged studies of men who have a natural taste for

Abandonment of Greek.

erudition, it is idle to shut one's eyes to the fact that most men have no inclination for school-work after they have left school, and if they had the inclination they have not the time. Our own Dr. Arnold, the model English schoolmaster, said, "It is so hard to begin anything in after-life, and so comparatively easy to continue what has been begun, that I think we are bound to break ground, as it were, into several of the mines of knowledge with our pupils; that the first difficulties may be overcome by them whilst there is yet a power from without to aid their own faltering resolution, and that so they may be enabled, if they will, to go on with the study hereafter." The principle here expressed is no doubt one of the important principles of all early education, and yet I think that it cannot be safely followed without taking account of human nature, such as it is. Everything hangs on that little parenthesis "if they will." And if they will *not*, how then? The time spent in breaking the ground has been wasted, except so far as the exercise of breaking the ground may have been useful in mental gymnastics.

Beginnings.

Mature life brings so many professional or social duties that it leaves scant time for culture; and those who care for culture most earnestly and sincerely, are the very persons who will economize time to the utmost. Now, to read a language that has been very imperfectly mastered is felt to be a bad economy of time. Suppose the case of a man occupied in business who has studied Greek rather assiduously in youth and yet not enough to read it with facility. Suppose that this man wants to get at the mind of Plato. He can read the original, but he reads it so slowly that it would cost him more hours than he can spare, and this is why he has recourse to a trans-

Duties of mature life

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lation. In this case there is no indifference to Greek culture; on the contrary, the reader desires to assimilate what he can of it, but the very earnestness of his wish to have free access to ancient thought makes him prefer it in modern language.

This is the most favourable instance that can be imagined, except, of course, those exceedingly rare cases where a man has leisure enough, and enthusiasm enough, to become a Hellenist. The great majority of our contemporaries do not care for ancient thought at all, it is so remote from them, it belongs to conditions of civilization so different from their own, it is encumbered with so many lengthy discussions of questions which have been settled by the subsequent experience of the world, that the modern mind prefers to occupy itself with its own anxieties and its own speculations. It is a great error to suppose that indifference to ancient thinking is peculiar to the spirit of Philistinism; for the most cultivated contemporary intellects seek light from each other rather than from the ancients. One of the most distinguished of modern thinkers, a scholar of the rarest classical attainments, said to me in reference to some scheme of mine for renewing my classical studies, that they would be of no more use to me than numismatics. It is this feeling, the feeling that Greek speculation is of less consequence to the modern world than German and French speculation, which causes so many of us, rightly or wrongly, to regard it as a palæontological curiosity, interesting for those who are curious as to the past of the human mind, but not likely to be influential upon its future.

Indifference to ancient thought.

Opinion of a classical scholar.

This estimate of ancient thinking is not often expressed quite so openly as I have just expressed it, and yet it is

very generally prevalent even amongst the most thoughtful people, especially if modern science has had any conspicuous influence in the formation of their minds. The truth is, as Sydney Smith observed many years ago, that there is a confusion of language in the use of the word "ancient." We say "the ancients," as if they were older and more experienced men than we are, whereas the age and experience are entirely on our side. They were the clever children, "and we only are the white-bearded, silver-headed ancients, who have treasured up, and are prepared to profit by, all the experience which human life can supply." The sense of our larger experience, as it grows in us and becomes more distinctly conscious, produces a corresponding decline in our feelings of reverence for classic times. The past has bequeathed to us its results, and we have incorporated them into our own edifice, but we have used them rather as materials than as models.

Confusion of words

The moderns older than the ancients.

In your practical desire to retain in education only what is likely to be used, you are willing to preserve Latin. M. Jules Simon says that Latin ought to be studied only to be read. On this point permit me to offer an observation. The one thing I regret about Latin is that we have ceased to speak it. The natural method, and by far the most rapid and sure method of learning a language, is to begin by acquiring words in order to use them to ask for what we want; after that we acquire other words for narration and the expression of our sentiments. By far the shortest way to learn to read a language is to begin by speaking it. The colloquial tongue is the basis of the literary tongue. This is so true that with all the pains and trouble you give to the Latin education of your pupils, you cannot teach them as much

The study of Latin.

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Latin, for reading only, in the course of ten years, as a living foreigner will give them of his own language in ten months. I seriously believe that if your object is to make boys read Latin easily, you begin at the wrong end. It is deplorable that the learned should ever have allowed Latin to become a dead language, since in permitting this they have enormously increased the difficulty of acquiring it, even for the purposes of scholarship.

Latin.

No foreigner who knows the French people will disapprove of the novel desire to know the modern languages, which has been one of the most unexpected consequences of the war. Their extreme ignorance of the literature of other nations has been the cause of enormous evils. Notwithstanding her central position, France has been a very isolated country intellectually, much more isolated than England, more isolated even than Transylvania, where foreign literatures are familiar to the cultivated classes. This isolation has produced very lamentable effects, not only on the national culture but most especially on the national character. No modern nation, however important, can safely remain in ignorance of its contemporaries. The Frenchman was like a gentleman shut up within his own park-wall, having no intercourse with his neighbours, and reading nothing but the history of his own ancestors—for the Romans were your ancestors, intellectually. It is only by the study of living languages, and their continual use, that we can learn our true place in the world. A Frenchman was studying Hebrew; I ventured to suggest that German might possibly be more useful. To this he answered, *that there was no literature in German.* "*Vous avez Goethe, vous avez Schiller, et vous avez Lessing, mais en dehors de ces trois noms il n'y a rien.*" This meant simply that my

Modern languages.

A Frenchman on German literature.

student of Hebrew measured German literature by his own knowledge of it. Three names had reached him, only names, and only three of them. As to the men who were unknown to him, he had decided that they did not exist. Certainly, if there are many Frenchmen in this condition, it is time that they learned a little German.

LETTER VIII.

TO A STUDENT OF MODERN LANGUAGES.

Standard of attainment in living languages higher than in ancient ones—Difficulty of maintaining high pretensions—Prevalent illusion about the facility of modern languages—Easy to speak them badly—Some propositions based upon experience—Expectations and disappointments.

HAD your main purpose in the education of yourself (I do not say self-education, for you wisely accept all help from others) been the attainment of classical scholarship, I might have observed that as the received standard in that kind of learning is not a very elevated one, you might reasonably hope to reach it with a certain calculable quantity of effort. The classical student has only to contend against other students who are and have been situated very much as he is situated himself. They have learned Latin and Greek from grammars and dictionaries as he is learning them, and the only natural advantages which any of his predecessors may have possessed are superiorities of memory which may be compensated by his greater perseverance, or superiorities of sympathy to which he may "level up" by that acquired and artificial interest which comes from pro-

Classical students.

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Students of modern languages.

tracted application. But the student of modern languages has to contend against advantages of situation, as the gardeners of an inhospitable climate contend against the natural sunshine of the south. How easy it is to have a fruitful date-tree in Arabia, how difficult in England! How easy for the Florentine to speak Italian, how difficult for us! The modern linguist can never fence himself behind that stately unquestionableness which shields the classical scholar. His knowledge may at any time be put to the severest of all tests, to a test incomparably more severe than the strictest university examination. The first *native* that he meets is his examiner, the first foreign city is his Oxford. And this is probably one reason why accomplishment in modern languages has been rather a matter of utility than of dignity, for it is difficult to keep up great pretensions in the face of a multitude of critics. What would the most learned-looking gown avail, if a malicious foreigner were laughing at us?

Severe tests of their efficiency.

Satisfactoriness of severe tests.

But there is a deep satisfaction in the severity of the test. An honest and courageous student likes to be clearly aware of the exact value of his acquisitions. He takes his French to Paris and has it tested there as we take our plate to the silversmith, and after that he knows, or may know, quite accurately what it is worth. He has not the dignity of scholarship, he is not held to be a learned man, but he has acquired something which may be of daily use to him in society, or in commerce, or in literature; and there are thousands of educated natives who can accurately estimate his attainment and help him to a higher perfection. All this is deeply satisfying to a lover of intellectual realities. The modern linguist is always on firm ground, and in broad daylight.

He may impede his own progress by the illusions of solitary self-conceit, but the atmosphere outside is not favourable to such illusions. It is well for him that the temptations to charlatanism are so few, that the risks of exposure are so frequent.

Illusions about facility.

Still there *are* illusions, and the commonest of them is that a modern language may be very easily mastered. There is a popular idea that French is easy, that Italian is easy, that German is more difficult, yet by no means insuperably difficult. It is believed that when an Englishman has spent all the best years of his youth in attempting to learn Latin and Greek, he may acquire one or two modern languages with little effort during a brief residence on the Continent. It is certainly true that we may learn any number of foreign languages so as to speak them badly, but it surely cannot be easy to speak them well. It may be inferred that this is not easy because the accomplishment is so rare. The inducements are common, the accomplishment is rare. Thousands of English people have very strong reasons for learning French, thousands of French people could improve their position by learning English; but rare indeed are the men and women who know both languages thoroughly.

The following propositions, based on much observation of a kind wholly unprejudiced, and tested by a not inconsiderable experience, will be found, I believe, unassailable.

Five propositions about languages.

1. *Whenever a foreign language is perfectly acquired there are peculiar family conditions. The person has either married a person of the other nation, or is of mixed blood.*

2. *When a foreign language has been acquired (there are instances of this) in quite absolute perfection, there is almost*

always some loss in the native tongue. Either the native tongue is not spoken correctly, or it is not spoken with perfect ease.

3. *A man sometimes speaks two languages correctly, his father's and his mother's, or his own and his wife's, but never three.*

4. *Children can speak several languages exactly like natives, but in succession, never simultaneously. They forget the first in acquiring the second, and so on.*

5. *A language cannot be learned by an adult without five years' residence in the country where it is spoken, and without habits of close observation a residence of twenty years is insufficient.*

This is not encouraging, but it is the truth. Happily, a knowledge which falls far short of mastery may be of much practical use in the common affairs of life, and may even afford some initiation into foreign literatures. I do not argue that because perfection is denied of us by the circumstances of our lives or the necessities of our organization we are therefore to abandon the study to every language but the mother tongue. It may be of use to us to know several languages imperfectly, if only we confess the hopelessness of absolute attainment. That which is truly, and deeply, and seriously an injury to our intellectual life, is the foolishness of the too common vanity which first deludes itself with childish expectations, and then tortures itself with late regret for failure which might have been easily foreseen.

LETTER IX.

TO A STUDENT OF MODERN LANGUAGES.

Cases known to the Author—Opinion of an English linguist—Family conditions—An Englishman who lived forty years in France—Influence of children—An Italian in France—Displacement of one language by another—English lady married to a Frenchman—An Italian in Garibaldi's army—Corruption of languages by the uneducated when they learn more than one—Neapolitan servant of an English gentleman—A Scotch servant-woman—The author's eldest boy—Substitution of one language for another—In mature life we lose facility—The resisting power of adults—Seen in international marriages—Case of a retired English officer—Two Germans in France—Germans in London—The innocence of the ear—Imperfect attainment of little intellectual use—Too many languages attempted in education—Polyglot waiters—Indirect benefits.

My five propositions about learning modern languages appear from your answer to have rather surprised you, and you ask for some instances in illustration. I am aware that my last letter was dogmatic, so let me begin by begging your pardon for its dogmatism. The present communication may steer clear of that rock of offence, for it shall confine itself to an account of cases that I have known.

One of the most accomplished of English linguists remarked to me that after much observation of the labours of others, and a fair estimate of his own, he had come to the rather discouraging conclusion that it was not possible to learn a foreign language. He did not take account of the one exceptional class of cases where the family conditions make the use of two languages habitual. The most favourable family conditions are not

A discouraging conclusion

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in themselves sufficient to *ensure* the acquisition of a language, but wherever an instance of perfect acquisition is to be found, these family conditions are always found along with it. My friend W., an English artist living in Paris, speaks French with quite absolute accuracy as to grammar and choice of expression, and with accuracy of pronunciation so nearly absolute that the best French ears can detect nothing wrong but the pronunciation of the letter "*r*." He has lived in France for the space of forty years, but it may be doubted whether in forty years he could have mastered the language as he has done if he had not married a native. French has been his home language for thirty years and more, and the perfect ease and naturalness of his diction are due to the powerful home influences, especially to the influence of children. A child is born that speaks the foreign tongue from the first inarticulate beginnings. It makes its own child-language, and the father as he hears it is born over again in the foreign land by tender paternal sympathy. Gradually the sweet child-talk gives place to the perfect tongue, and the father follows it by insensible gradations, himself the most docile of pupils, led onward rather than instructed by the winning and playful little master, incomparably the best of masters. The process here is nature's own inimitable process. Every new child that is born to a man so situated carries him through a repetition of that marvellous course of teaching. The language *grows* in his brain from the first rudiments—the real natural rudiments, not the hard rudiments of the grammarian—just as plants grow naturally from their seeds. It has not been built by human processes of piecing together, but has developed itself like a living creature. This way of learning a language possesses over the dic-

An English resident in France.

Children the best teachers.

Natural growth of a language.

tionary process exactly the kind of superiority which a living man, developed naturally from the fœtus, possesses over the clastic anatomical man-model of the ingenious doctor Auzoux. The doctor's models are remarkably perfect in construction, they have all the organs, but they have not life.

When, however, this natural process of growth is allowed to go forward without watchful care, it is likely to displace the mother tongue. It is sometimes affirmed that the impressions of childhood are never effaced, that the mother tongue is *never* forgotten. It may be that it is never wholly forgotten, except in the case of young children, but it may become so imperfect as to be practically of little use. I knew an Italian who came to France as a young man and learned his profession there. He was afterwards naturalized, married a French lady, had several children, pursued a very successful career in Paris, and became ultimately French Ambassador at the court of Victor Emmanuel. His French was so perfect that it was quite impossible for anyone to detect the usual Italian accents. I used to count him as a remarkable and almost solitary instance of a man speaking two languages in their perfection, but I learned since then that his French had displaced his Italian, and so completely that he was quite unable to speak Italian correctly, and made use of French invariably when in Italy. The risk of this displacement is always greatest in cases where the native tongue is not kept up by means of literature. Byron and Shelley, or our contemporary Charles Lever, would run little risk of losing English by continental residence, but people not accustomed to reading and writing often forget the mother tongue in a few years, even when the foreign one which

Language imperfectly retained.

Case of an Italian.

Loss of the mother tongue.

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Case of an English lady settled in France.

has displaced it is still in a state of imperfection. Madame L. is an English lady who married a Frenchman: neither her husband nor her children speak English, and as her relatives live in one of our most distant colonies, she has been separated from them for many years. Isolated thus from English society, living in a part of France rarely visited by her countrymen, never reading English, and writing it little and at long intervals, she speaks it now with much difficulty and diffidence. Her French is not grammatical, though she has lived for many years with people who speak grammatically; but then her French is fluent and alive, truly her own living language now, whilst English is, if not wholly forgotten, dead almost as our Latin is dead. She and I always speak French together when we meet, because it is easier for her than English, and a more natural expression. I have known some other cases of displacement of the native tongue, and have lately had the opportunity of watching a case of such displacement during its progress.

A Garibaldian sergeant.

A sergeant in the Italian army deserted to join Garibaldi in the campaign of 1870. On the conclusion of peace it was impossible for him to return to Italy, so he settled in France and married there. I found some work for him, and for some months saw him frequently. Up to the date of his marriage he spoke no language but Italian, which he could read and write correctly, but after his marriage the process of displacement of the native tongue began immediately by the corruption of it. He did not keep his Italian safely by itself, putting the French in a place of its own as he gradually acquired it, but he mixed the two inextricably together. Imagine the case of a man who, having a bottle half full of wine, gets some beer given him and pours it immediately into the

Corruption of the native tongue.

Case of a Neapolitan domestic.

wine-bottle. The beer will never be pure beer, but it will effectually spoil the wine. This process is not so much one of displacement as of corruption. It takes place readily in uncultivated minds, with feeble separating powers. Another example of this was a Neapolitan servant of an English gentleman, who mixed his Italian twice, first with French and afterwards with English, producing a compound intelligible to nobody but himself, if indeed he himself understood it. At the time I knew him, the man had no means of communication with his species. When his master told him to do anything, he made a guess at what was likely to be for the moment his master's most probable want, and sometimes hit the mark, but more generally missed it. The man's name was Alberino, and I remember on one occasion profiting by a mistaken guess of his. After a visit to Alberino's master, my servant brought forth a magnificent basket of trout, which surprised me, as nothing had been said about them. However, we ate them, and only discovered afterwards that the present was due to an illusion of Alberino's. His master had never told him to give me the trout, but he had interpreted some other order in that sense. When you asked him for mustard, he would first touch the salt, and then the pepper, &c., looking at you inquiringly till you nodded assent. Any attempt at conversation with Alberino was sure to lead to a perfect comedy of misunderstandings. He never had the remotest idea of what his interlocutor was talking about; but he pretended to catch your meaning, and answered at haphazard. He had a habit of talking aloud to himself, "but in a tongue no man could understand."

It is a law that cultivated people can keep languages

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Difficulty of keeping languages separated.

Case of a Scotch servant.

apart, and in their purity, better than persons who have not habits of intellectual analysis. When I lived in Scotland three languages were spoken in my house all day long, and a housemaid came to us from the Lowlands who spoke nothing but Lowland Scotch. She used to ask what was the French for this thing or that, and then what was the Gaelic for it. Having been answered, she invariably asked the further question which of the three words, French, Gaelic, or English, *was the right word.* She remained, to the last, entirely incapable of conceiving how all the three could be right. Had she learned another language, it must have been by substitution for her own. This is exactly the natural process which takes place in the brains of children who are transferred from one country to another. My eldest boy spoke English in childhood as well as any other English child of his age. He was taken to the south of France, and in three months he replaced his English with Provençal, which he learned from the servants about him. There were two ladies in the house who spoke English well, and did all in their power, in compliance with my urgent entreaties, to preserve the boy's native language; but the substitution took place too rapidly, and was beyond control. He began by an unwillingness to use English words whenever he could use Provençal instead, and in a remarkably short time this unwillingness was succeeded by inability. The native language was as completely taken out of his brain as a violin is taken out of its case: nothing remained, *nothing*, not one word, not any echo of an accent. And as a violinist may put a new instrument into the case from which he has removed the old one, so the new language occupied the whole space which had been occupied by English. When I

Substitution.

The Author's eldest son.

saw the child again, there was no means of communication between us.

After that, he was removed to the north of France, and the same process began again. As Provençal had pushed out English, so French began to push out Provençal. The process was wonderfully rapid. The child heard people speak French, and he began to speak French like them without any formal teaching. He spoke the language as he breathed the air. In a few weeks he did not retain the least remnant of his Provençal; it was gone after his English into the limbo of the utterly forgotten.

Recovery of language in novels.

Novelists have occasionally made use of cases similar to this, but they speak of the forgotten language as being forgotten in the manner that Scott forgot the manuscript of "Waverley," which he found afterwards in the drawers of an old writing-desk when he was seeking for fishing-tackle. They assume (conveniently for the purposes of their art) that the first language we learn is never really lost, but may be as it were under certain circumstances *mislaid*, to be found again at some future period. Now, although something of this kind may be possible when the first language has been spoken in rather advanced boyhood, I am convinced that in childhood a considerable number of languages might succeed each other without leaving any trace whatever. I might have remarked that in addition to English, Provençal, and French, my boy had understood Gaelic in his infancy, at least to some extent, though he did not speak it. The languages in his case succeeded each other without any cost of effort, and without any appreciable effect on health. The pronunciation of each language was quite faultless so far as foreign accent went; the child had the defects

Succession of languages.

PART III. LETTER IX.

of children, but of children born in the different countries where he lived.

As we grow older this facility of acquisition gradually leaves us. M. Philarète Chasles says that it is quite impossible for any adult to learn German: an adult may learn German as Dr. Arnold did for purposes of erudition, for which it is enough to know a language as we know Latin, but this is not mastery. You have met with many foreign residents in England, who after staying in the country for many years can barely make themselves intelligible, and must certainly be incapable of appreciating those beauties of our literature which are dependent upon arrangements of sound. The resisting power of the adult brain is quite as remarkable as the assimilating power of the immature brain. A child hears a sound, and repeats it with perfect accuracy; a man hears a sound, and by way of imitation utters something altogether different, being nevertheless persuaded that it is at least a close and satisfactory approximation. Children imitate well, but adults badly, and the acquisition of languages depends mainly on imitation. The resisting power of adults is often seen very remarkably in international marriages. In those classes of society where there is not much culture, or leisure or disposition for culture, the one will not learn the other's language from opportunity or from affection, but only under absolute necessity. It seems as if two people living always together would gain each other's languages as a matter of course, but the fact is that they do not. French people who marry foreigners do not usually acquire the foreign language if the pair remain in France; English people under similar conditions make the attempt more frequently, but they rest contented with imperfect attainment.

Foreign residents in England.

Children and adults.

International marriages.

If the power of resistance is so great in people who being wedded together for life have peculiarly strong inducements for learning each other's languages, it need surprise us little to find a like power of resistance in cases where motives of affection are altogether absent. Englishmen who go to France as adults, and settle there, frequently remain for many years in a state of half-knowledge which, though it may carry them through the little difficulties of life at railway stations and restaurants, is for any intellectual purpose of no conceivable utility. I knew a retired English officer, a bachelor, who for many years had lived in Paris without any intention of returning to England. His French just barely carried him through the small transactions of his daily life, but was so limited and so incorrect that he could not maintain a conversation. His vocabulary was very meagre; his genders were all wrong, and he did not know one single verb, literally not one. His pronunciation was so foreign as to be very nearly unintelligible, and he hesitated so much that it was painful to have to listen to him. I could mention a celebrated German, who has lived in or near Paris for the last twenty years, and who can neither speak nor write the language with any approach to accuracy. Another German, who settled in France as a master of languages, wrote French tolerably, but spoke it *in*tolerably. There are Germans in London, who have lived there long enough to have families and make fortunes, yet who continue to repeat the ordinary German faults of pronunciation, the same faults which they committed years ago, when first they landed on our shores.

An Englishman in Paris.

Germans in France.

Germans in London.

The child hears and repeats the true sound, the adult misleads himself by the spelling. Seldom indeed can the adult recover the innocence of the ear. It is like

The innocence of the ear

PART III. LETTER IX

the innocence of the eye, which has to be recovered before we can paint from nature, and which belongs only to infancy and to art.

Let me observe, in conclusion, that although to know a foreign language perfectly is a most valuable aid to the intellectual life, I have never known an instance of very imperfect attainment which seemed to enrich the student intellectually. Until you can really feel the refinements of a language, your mental culture can get little help or furtherance from it of any kind, nothing but an interminable series of misunderstandings. I think that in the education of our boys too many languages are attempted, and that their minds would profit more by the perfect acquisition of a single language in addition to the native tongue. This, of course, is looking at the matter simply from the intellectual point of view. There may be practical reasons for knowing several languages imperfectly. It may be of use to many men in commercial situations to know a little of several languages, even a few words and phrases are valuable to a traveller, but all intellectual labour of the higher kind requires much more than that. It is of use to society that there should be polyglot waiters who can tell us when the train starts in four or five languages; but the polyglot waiters themselves are not intellectually advanced by their accomplishment; for, after all, the facts of the railway time-table are always the same small facts, in however many languages they may be announced. True culture ought to strengthen the faculty of thinking, and to provide the material upon which that noble faculty may operate. An accomplishment which does neither of these two things for us is useless for our culture, though it may be of considerable practical convenience in the affairs

Too many languages attempted.

Polyglot waiters.

Indirect benefits.

of ordinary life. It is right to add, however, that there is sometimes an *indirect* intellectual benefit from such accomplishments. To be able to order dinner in Spanish is not in itself an intellectual advantage; but if the dinner, when you have eaten it, enables you to visit a cathedral whose architecture you are qualified to appreciate, there is a clear intellectual gain, though an indirect one.

LETTER X.

TO A STUDENT WHO LAMENTED HIS DEFECTIVE MEMORY.

The author rather inclined to congratulation than to condolence —Value of a selecting memory—Studies of the young Goethe—His great faculty of assimilation—A good literary memory like a well-edited periodical—The selecting memory in art—Treacherous memories—Cures suggested for them—The mnemotechnic art contrary to the true discipline of the mind—Two instances—The memory safely aided only by right association.

That miserable memories may be selecting memories

So far from writing, as you seem to expect me to do, a letter of condolence on the subject of what you are pleased to call your "miserable memory," I feel disposed rather to indite a letter of congratulation. It is possible that you may be blessed with a selecting memory, which is not only useful for what it retains but for what it rejects. In the immense mass of facts which come before you in literature and in life, it is well that you should suffer from as little bewilderment as possible. The nature of your memory saves you from this by unconsciously selecting what has interested you, and letting the rest go by. What interests you is what concerns you.

In saying this I speak simply from the intellectual point of view, and suppose you to be an intellectual

PART III. LETTER X.

man by the natural organization of your brain, to begin with. In saying that what interests you is what concerns you, I mean intellectually, not materially. It may concern you, in the pecuniary sense, to take an interest in the law; yet your mind, left to itself, would take little or no interest in law, but an absorbing interest in botany.

Studies of the young Goethe.

The passionate studies of the young Goethe, in many different directions, always in obedience to the predominant interests of the moment, are the best example of the way in which a great intellect, with remarkable powers of acquisition and liberty to grow in free luxuriance, sends its roots into various soils and draws from them the constituents of its sap. As a student of law, as a university student even, he was not of the type which parents and professors consider satisfactory. He neglected jurisprudence, he neglected even his college studies, but took an interest in so many other pursuits that his mind became rich indeed. Yet the wealth which his mind acquired seems to have been due to that liberty of ranging by which it was permitted to him to seek his own everywhere, according to the maxim of French law, *chacun prend son bien où il le trouve.* Had he been a poor student, bound down to the exclusively legal studies, which did not greatly interest him, it is likely that no one would ever have suspected his immense faculty of assimilation. In this way men who are set by others to load their memories with what is not their proper intellectual food, never get the credit of having any memory at all, and end by themselves believing that they have none. These bad memories are often the best, they are often the selecting memories. They seldom win distinction in examinations, but in literature and art. They are quite incomparably superior

Bad memories

to the miscellaneous memories that receive only as boxes and drawers receive what is put into them. A good literary or artistic memory is not like a post-office that takes in everything, but like a very well-edited periodical which prints nothing that does not harmonize with its intellectual life. A well-known author gave me this piece of advice: "Take as many notes as you like, but when you write do not look at them—what you remember is what you must write, and you ought to give things exactly the degree of relative importance that they have in your memory. If you forget much, it is well, it will only save beforehand the labour of erasure." This advice would not be suitable to every author; an author who dealt much in minute facts ought to be allowed to refer to his memoranda; but from the artistic point of view in literature the advice was wise indeed. In painting, our preferences select whilst we are in the presence of nature, and our memory selects when we are away from nature. The most beautiful compositions are produced by the selecting office of the memory, which retains some features, and even greatly exaggerates them, whilst it diminishes others and often altogether omits them. An artist who blamed himself for these exaggerations and omissions would blame himself for being an artist.

A good literary memory.

Memory in painting.

Let me add a protest against the common methods of curing what are called treacherous memories. They are generally founded upon the association of ideas, which is so far rational, but then the sort of association which they have recourse to is unnatural, and produces precisely the sort of disorder which would be produced in dress if a man were insane enough to tie, let us say, a frying-pan to one of his coat-tails and a child's kite to the other. The true discipline of the mind is to be effected

Cures for defective memories

PART III. LETTER X.

Objections to the mnemotechnic art.

only by associating those things together which have a real relation of some kind, and the profounder the relation, the more it is based upon the natural constitution of things, and the less it concerns trifling external details, the better will be the order of the intellect. The mnemotechnic art wholly disregards this, and is therefore unsuited for intellectual persons, though it may be of some practical use in ordinary life. A little book on memory, of which many editions have been sold, suggests to men who forget their umbrellas that they ought always to associate the image of an umbrella with that of an open door, so that they could never leave any house without thinking of one. But would it not be preferable to lose two or three guineas annually rather than see a spectral umbrella in every doorway? The same writer suggests an idea which appears even more objectionable. Because we are apt to lose time, we ought, he says, to imagine a skeleton clock-face on the visage of every man we talk with; that is to say, we ought systematically to set about producing in our brains an absurd association of ideas, which is quite closely allied to one of the most common forms of insanity. It is better to forget umbrellas and lose hours than fill our minds with associations of a kind which every disciplined intellect does all it can to get rid of.

The rational art of memory.

The rational art of memory is that used in natural science. We remember anatomy and botany because, although the facts they teach are infinitely numerous, they are arranged according to the constructive order of nature. Unless there were a clear relation between the anatomy of one animal and that of others, the memory would refuse to burden itself with the details of their structure. So in the study of languages, we learn several languages by perceiving their true

structural relations, and remembering these. Association of this kind, and the maintenance of order in the mind, are the only arts of memory compatible with the right government of the intellect. Incongruous, and even superficial associations ought to be systematically discouraged, and we ought to value the negative or rejecting power of the memory. The finest intellects are as remarkable for the ease with which they resist and throw off what does not concern them as for the permanence with which their own truths engrave themselves. They are like clear glass, which fluoric acid etches indelibly, but which comes out of vitriol intact.

Reception and rejection.

LETTER XI.

TO A MASTER OF ARTS WHO SAID THAT A CERTAIN DISTINGUISHED PAINTER WAS HALF-EDUCATED.

Conventional idea about the completeness of education—The estimate of a schoolmaster—No one can be fully educated—Even Leonardo da Vinci fell short of the complete expression of his faculties—The word "education" used in two different senses—The acquisition of knowledge—Who are the learned?—Quotation from Sydney Smith—What a "half-educated" painter had learned—What faculties he had developed.

AN intelligent lady was lamenting to me the other day that when she heard anything she did not quite agree with, it only set her thinking, and did not suggest any immediate reply. "Three hours afterwards," she added, "I arrive at the answer which ought to have been given, but then it is exactly three hours too late."

Being afflicted with precisely the same pitiable infirmity, I said nothing in reply to a statement you made

PART III. LETTER XI.

yesterday evening at dinner, but it occupied me in the hansom as it rolled between the monotonous lines of houses, and followed me even into my bedroom. I should like to answer it this morning, as one answers a letter.

"Half-educated."

You said that our friend the painter was "half-educated." This made me try to understand what it is to be three-quarters educated, and seven-eighths educated, and finally what must be that quite perfect state of the man who is whole-educated.

I fear that you must have adopted some conventional idea about completeness of education, since you believe that there is any such thing as completeness, and that education can be measured by fractions, like the divisions of a two-foot rule.

Arbitrary ideas.

Is not such an idea just a little arbitrary? It seems to be the idea of a schoolmaster, with his little list of subjects and his professional habit of estimating the progress of his boys by the good marks they are likely to obtain from their examiners. The half-educated schoolboy would be a schoolboy half-way towards his bachelor's degree—is that it?

School estimates.

In the estimates of school and college this may be so, and it may be well to keep up the illusion, during boyhood, that there is such a thing attainable as the complete education that you assume. But the wider experience of manhood tends rather to convince us that no one can be fully educated, and that the more rich and various the natural talents, the greater will be the difficulty of educating the whole of them. Indeed it does not appear that in a state of society so advanced in the different specialities as ours is, men were ever intended to do more than develop by education a few of their natural gifts.

Leonardo da Vinci.

The only man who came near to a complete education was Leonardo da Vinci, but such a personage would be impossible to-day. No contemporary Leonardo could be at the same time a leader in fine art, a great military and civil engineer, and a discoverer in theoretical science; the specialists have gone too far for him. Born in our day, Leonardo would have been either a specialist or an amateur. Situated even as he was, in a time and country so remarkably favourable to the general development of a variously gifted man, he still fell short of the complete expansion of all his extraordinary faculties. He was a great artist, and yet his artistic power was never developed beyond the point of elaborately careful labour; he never attained the assured manipulation of Titian and Paul Veronese, not to mention the free facility of Velasquez, or the splendid audacity of Rubens. His natural gifts were grand enough to have taken him to a pitch of mastery that he never reached, but his mechanical and scientific tendencies would have their development also, and withdrew so much time from art that every renewal of his artistic labour was accompanied by long and anxious reflection.

He stopped short of perfect mastery in painting.

The word "education" is used in senses so different that confusion is not always avoided. Some people mean by it the acquisition of knowledge, others the development of faculty. If you mean the first, then the half-educated man would be a man who knew half what he ought to know, or who only half knew the different sciences, which the wholly educated know thoroughly. Who is to fix the subjects? Is it the opinion of the learned?—if so, who are the learned? "A learned man! —a scholar!—a man of erudition! Upon whom are these epithets of approbation bestowed? Are they given

The learned.

PART III. LETTER XI.

Who are the learned?

to men acquainted with the science of government? thoroughly masters of the geographical and commercial relations of Europe? to men who know the properties of bodies, and their action upon each other? No: this is not learning; it is chemistry, or political economy, not learning. The distinguishing abstract term, the epithet of Scholar, is reserved for him who writes on the Æolic reduplication, and is familiar with the Sylburgian method of arranging defectives in ω and μι. The picture which a young Englishman, addicted to the pursuit of knowledge, draws—his *beau idéal* of human nature—his top and consummation of man's powers—is a knowledge of the Greek language. His object is not to reason, to imagine, or to invent; but to conjugate, decline, and derive. The situations of imaginary glory which he draws for himself, are the detection of an anapæst in the wrong place, or the restoration of a dative case which Cranzius had passed over, and the never-dying Ernesti failed to observe."

Clerical education.

By the help of the above passage from an article written sixty-three years ago by Sydney Smith, and by the help of another passage in the same paper where he tells us that the English clergy bring up the first young men of the country as if they were all to keep grammar schools in little country towns, I begin to understand what you mean by a half-educated person. You mean a person who is only half qualified for keeping a grammar school. In this sense it is very possible that our friend the painter possesses nothing beyond a miserable fraction of education. And yet he has picked up a good deal of valuable knowledge outside the technical acquirement of a most difficult profession. He studied two years in Paris, and four years in Florence and Rome. He speaks French

A painter's knowledge.

and Italian quite fluently, and with a fair degree of correctness. His knowledge of those two languages is incomparably more complete, in the sense of practical possession, than our fossilized knowledge of Latin, and he reads them almost as we read English, currently, and without translating. He has the heartiest enjoyment of good literature; there is evidence in his pictures of a most intelligent sympathy with the greatest inventive writers. Without having a scientific nature, he knows a good deal about anatomy. He has not read Greek poetry, but he has studied the old Greek mind in its architecture and sculpture. Nature has also endowed him with a just appreciation of music, and he knows the immortal masterpieces of the most illustrious composers. All these things would not qualify him to teach a grammar school, and yet what Greek of the age of Pericles ever knew half so much?

His skill.

This for the acquisition of knowledge; now for the development of faculty. In this respect he excels us as performing athletes excel the people in the streets. Consider the marvellous accuracy of his eye, the precision of his hand, the closeness of his observation, the vigour of his memory and invention! How clumsy and rude is the most learned pedant in comparison with the refinement of this delicate organization! Try to imagine what a disciplined creature he has become, how obedient are all his faculties to the commands of the central will! The brain conceives some image of beauty or wit, and immediately that clear conception is telegraphed to the well-trained fingers. Surely, if the results of education may be estimated from the evidences of skill, here are some of the most wonderful of such results.

PART IV.

THE POWER OF TIME.

LETTER I.

TO A MAN OF LEISURE WHO COMPLAINED OF WANT OF TIME.

PART IV. LETTER I.

Necessity for time-thrift in all cases—Serious men not much in danger from mere frivolity—Greater danger of losing time in our serious pursuits themselves—Time thrown away when we do not attain proficiency—Soundness of former scholarship a good example—Browning's Grammarian—Knowledge an organic whole—Soundness the possession of essential parts—Necessity of fixed limits in our projects of study—Limitation of purpose in the fine arts—In languages—Instance of M. Louis Énault—In music—Time saved by following kindred pursuits—Order and proportion the true secrets of time-thrift—A waste of time to leave fortresses untaken in our rear.

YOU complain of want of time—you, with your boundless leisure!

Time thrift.

It is true that the most absolute master of his own hours still needs thrift if he would turn them to account, and that too many *never* learn this thrift, whilst others learn it late. Will you permit me to offer briefly a few observations on time-thrift which have been suggested to me by my own experience and by the experience of intellectual friends?

Waste in known frivolities not the most dangerous.

It may be accepted for certain, to begin with, that men who like yourself seriously care for culture, and make it, next to moral duty, the principal object of their lives, are but little exposed to waste time in downright frivolity of any kind. You may be perfectly idle at your own times, and perfectly frivolous even, whenever you have a mind to be frivolous, but then you will be clearly aware how the time is passing, and you will throw it away knowingly, as the most careful of money-economists will throw away a few sovereigns in a confessedly foolish amusement, merely for the relief of a break in the habit of his life. To a man of your tastes and temper there is no danger of wasting too much time so long as the waste is intentional; but you are exposed to time-losses of a much more insidious character.

Waste of time in our serious work.

It is in our pursuits themselves that we throw away our most valuable time. Few intellectual men have the art of economizing the hours of study. The very necessity, which everyone acknowledges, of giving vast portions of life to attain proficiency in anything, makes us prodigal where we ought to be parsimonious, and careless where we have need of unceasing vigilance. The best time-savers are the love of soundness in all we learn or do, and a cheerful acceptance of inevitable limitations. There is a certain point of proficiency at which an acquisition begins to be of use, and unless we have the time and resolution necessary to reach that point, our labour is as completely thrown away as that of a mechanic who began to make an engine but never finished it. Each of us has acquisitions which remain permanently unavailable from their unsoundness, a language or two that we can neither speak nor write, a science of which the elements have not been mastered, an art which we

Time-savers.

PART IV. LETTER I.

cannot practise with satisfaction either to others or to ourselves. Now the time spent on these unsound accomplishments has been in great measure wasted, not quite absolutely wasted, since the mere labour of trying to learn has been a discipline for the mind, but wasted so far as the accomplishments themselves are concerned. And even this mental discipline, on which so much stress is laid by those whose interest it is to encourage unsound accomplishment, might be obtained more perfectly if the subjects of study were less numerous and more thoroughly understood. Let us not therefore in the studies of our maturity repeat the error of our youth. Let us determine to have soundness, that is, accurately organized knowledge in the studies we continue to pursue, and let us resign ourselves to the necessity for abandoning those pursuits in which soundness is not to be hoped for.

Soundness.

The old-fashioned idea about scholarship in Latin and Greek, that it ought to be based upon thorough grammatical knowledge, is a good example, so far as it goes, of what soundness really is. That ideal of scholarship failed only because it fell short of soundness in other directions and was not conscious of its failure. But there existed, in the minds of the old scholars, a fine resolution to be accurate, and a determination to give however much labour might be necessary for the attainment of accuracy, in which there was much grandeur. Like Mr. Browning's Grammarian, they said—

The old scholars.

Browning's Grammarian.

> "Let me know all! Prate not of most or least
> Painful or easy:"

and so at least they came to know the ancient tongues grammatically, which few of us do in these days.

I should define each kind of knowledge as an organic

whole, and soundness as the complete possession of all the essential parts. For example, soundness in violin-playing consists in being able to play the notes in all the positions, in tune, and with a pure intonation, whatever may be the degree of rapidity indicated by the musical composer. Soundness in painting consists in being able to lay a patch of colour having exactly the right shape and tint. Soundness in the use of language consists in being able to put the right word in the right place. In each of the sciences, there are certain elementary notions without which sound knowledge is not possible, but these elementary notions are more easily and rapidly acquired than the elaborate knowledge or confirmed skill necessary to the artist or the linguist. A man may be a sound botanist without knowing a very great number of plants, and the elements of sound botanical knowledge may be printed in a portable volume. And so it is with all the physical sciences; the elementary notions which are necessary to soundness of knowledge may be acquired rapidly and at any age. Hence it follows that all whose leisure for culture is limited, and who value soundness of knowledge, do wisely to pursue some branch of natural history rather than languages or the fine arts.

Soundness in painting.

In language.

Soundness in science

It is well for everyone who desires to attain a perfect economy of time, to make a list of the different pursuits to which he has devoted himself, and to put a note opposite to each of them indicating the degree of its unsoundness with as little self-delusion as may be. After having done this, he may easily ascertain in how many of these pursuits a sufficient degree of soundness is attainable for him, and when this has been decided he may at once effect a great saving by the total renunciation of the rest. With regard to those which remain, and which are

Degrees of unsoundness.

PART IV. LETTER I.

The fixing of limits.

to be carried farther, the next thing to be settled is the exact limit of their cultivation. Nothing is so favourable to sound culture as the definite fixing of limits. Suppose, for example, that the student said to himself "I desire to know the flora of the valley I live in," and then set to work systematically to make a herbarium illustrating that flora, it is probable that his labour would be more thorough, his temper more watchful and hopeful, than if he set himself to the boundless task of the illimitable flora of the world. Or in the pursuit of fine art, an amateur discouraged by the glaring unsoundness of the kind of art taught by ordinary drawing-masters, would find the basis of a more substantial superstructure on a narrower but firmer ground. Suppose that instead of the usual messes of bad colour and bad form, the student

In art.

produced work having some definite and not unattainable purpose, would there not be, here also, an assured economy of time? Accurate drawing is the basis of soundness in the fine arts, and an amateur, by perseverance, may reach accuracy in drawing; this, at least, has been proved by some examples—not by many, certainly, but

In language.

by some. In languages we may have a limited purpose also. That charming and most intelligent traveller,

Louis Énault.

Louis Énault, tells us that he regularly gave a week to the study of each new language that he needed, and found that week sufficient. The assertion is not so presumptuous as it appears. For the practical necessities of travelling M. Énault found that he required about four hundred words, and that, having a good memory, he was able to learn about seventy words a day. The secret of his success was the invaluable art of selection, and the strict limitation of effort in accordance with a preconceived design. A traveller not so well skilled in selection

might have learned a thousand words with less advantage to his travels, and a traveller less decided in purpose might have wasted several months on the frontier of every new country in hopeless efforts to master the intricacies of grammatical form. It is evident that in the strictest sense M. Énault's knowledge of Norwegian cannot have been sound, since he did not master the grammar, but it was sound in its own strictly limited way, since he got possession of the four hundred words which were to serve him as current coin. On the same principle it is a good plan for students of Latin and Greek who have not time to reach true scholarship (half a lifetime is necessary for that), to propose to themselves simply the reading of the original authors with the help of a literal translation. In this way they may attain a closer acquaintance with ancient literature than would be possible by translation alone, whilst on the other hand their reading will be much more extensive on account of its greater rapidity. It is, for most of us, a waste of time to read Latin and Greek without a translation, on account of the comparative slowness of the process; but it is always an advantage to know what was really said in the original, and to test the exactness of the translator by continual reference to the *ipsissima verba* of the author. When the knowledge of the ancient language is not sufficient even for this, it may still be of use for occasional comparison, even though the passage has to be fought through *à coups de dictionnaire*. What most of us need in reference to the ancient languages is a frank resignation to a restriction of some kind. It is simply impossible for men occupied as most of us are in other pursuits to reach perfect scholarship in those languages, and if we reached it we should not have time to maintain it.

Reading Latin and Greek.

PART IV. LETTER I.

Modern languages.

In modern languages it is not so easy to fix limits satisfactorily. You may resolve to read French or German without either writing or speaking them, and that would be an effectual limit, certainly. But in practice it is found difficult to keep within that boundary if ever you travel or have intercourse with foreigners. And when once you begin to speak, it is so humiliating to speak badly, that a lover of soundness in accomplishment will never rest perfectly satisfied until he speaks like a cultivated native, which nobody ever did except under peculiar family conditions.

Music.

In music the limits are found more easily. The amateur musician is frequently not inferior in feeling and taste to the more accomplished professional, and by selecting those compositions which require much feeling and taste for their interpretation, but not so much manual skill, he may reach a sufficient success. The art is to choose the very simplest music (provided of course that it is beautiful, which it frequently is), and to avoid all technical difficulties which are not really necessary to the expression of feeling. The amateur ought also to

Choice of an instrument.

select the easiest instrument, an instrument in which the notes are made for him already, rather than one which compels him to fix the notes as he is playing. The violin tempts amateurs who have a deep feeling for music because it renders feeling as no other instrument can render it, but the difficulty of just intonation is almost insuperable unless the whole time is given to that one instrument. It is a fatal error to perform on several different instruments, and an amateur who has done so may find a desirable limitation in restricting himself to one.

Much time is saved by following pursuits which help

Kindred pursuits.

each other. It is a great help to a landscape painter to know the botany of the country he works in, for botany gives the greatest possible distinctness to his memory of all kinds of vegetation. Therefore, if a landscape painter takes to the study of science at all, he would do well to study botany, which would be of use in his painting, rather than chemistry or mathematics, which would be entirely disconnected from it. The memory easily retains the studies which are auxiliary to the chief pursuit. Entomologists remember plants well, the reason being that they find insects in them, just as Leslie the painter had an excellent memory for houses where there were any good pictures to be found.

Order and proportion in studies.

The secret of order and proportion in our studies is the true secret of economy in time. To have one main pursuit and several auxiliaries, but none that are not auxiliary, is the true principle of arrangement. Many hard workers have followed pursuits as widely disconnected as possible, but this was for the refreshment of absolute change, not for the economy of time.

Fortresses untaken in the rear.

Lastly, it is a deplorable waste of time to leave fortresses untaken in our rear. Whatever has to be mastered ought to be mastered so thoroughly that we shall not have to come back to it when we ought to be carrying the war far into the enemy's country. But to study on this sound principle, we require not to be hurried. And this is why, to a sincere student, all external pressure, whether of examiners, or poverty, or business engagements, which causes him to leave work behind him which was not done as it ought to have been done, is so grievously, so intolerably vexatious.

PART IV. LETTER II.

LETTER II.

TO A YOUNG MAN OF GREAT TALENT AND ENERGY WHO HAD MAGNIFICENT PLANS FOR THE FUTURE.

Mistaken estimates about time and occasion—The Unknown Element—Procrastination often time's best preserver—Napoleon's advice to do nothing at all—Use of deliberation and of intervals of leisure—Artistic advantages of calculating time—Prevalent childishness about time—Illusions about reading—Bad economy of reading in languages we have not mastered—That we ought to be thrifty of time, but not avaricious—Time necessary in production—Men who work best under the sense of pressure—Rossini—That these cases prove nothing against time-thrift—The waste of time from miscalculation—People calculate accurately for short spaces, but do not calculate so well for long ones—Reason for this—Stupidity of the Philistines about wasted time—Töpffer and Claude Tillier—Retrospective miscalculations, and the regrets that result from them.

HAVE you ever observed that we pay much more attention to a wise passage when it is quoted, than when we read it in the original author? On the same principle, people will give a higher price to a picture-dealer than they would have given to the painter himself. The picture that has been once bought has a recommendation, and the quoted passage is both recommended and isolated from the context.

Trusting to this well-known principle, although I am aware that you have read everything that Sir Arthur Helps has published, I proceed to make the following quotation from one of his wisest books.

Quotation from Sir A. Helps.

"Time and occasion are the two important circumstances in human life, as regards which the most mistaken estimates are made. And the error is universal. It besets even the most studious and philosophic men.

This may notably be seen in the present day, when many most distinguished men have laid down projects for literature and philosophy, to be accomplished by them in their own lifetime, which would require several men and many lifetimes to complete; and, generally speaking, if any person, who has passed the meridian of life, looks back upon his career, he will probably own that his greatest errors have arisen from his not having made sufficient allowance for the length of time which his various schemes required for their fulfilment."

Traditional maxims.

There are many traditional maxims about time which insist upon its brevity, upon the necessity of using it whilst it is there, upon the impossibility of recovering what is lost; but the practical effect of these maxims upon conduct can scarcely be said to answer to their undeniable importance. The truth is, that although they tell us to economize our time, they cannot, in the nature of things, instruct us as to the methods by which it is to be economized. Human life is so extremely various and complicated, whilst it tends every day to still greater variety and complication, that all maxims of a general nature require a far higher degree of intelligence in their application to individual cases than it ever cost originally to invent them. Any person gifted with ordinary common sense can perceive that life is short, that time flies, that we ought to make good use of the present; but it needs the union of much experience, with the most consummate wisdom, to know exactly what ought to be done and what ought to be left undone—the latter being frequently by far the more important of the two.

Difficulty of applying general maxims.

Amongst the favourable influences of my early life was the kindness of a venerable country gentleman, who had seen a great deal of the world and passed many years,

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before he inherited his estates, in the practice of a laborious profession. I remember a theory of his, that experience was much less valuable than is generally supposed, because, except in matters of simple routine, the problems that present themselves to us for solution are nearly always dangerous from the presence of some unknown element.

Pitfalls.

The unknown element he regarded as a hidden pitfall, and he warned me that in my progress through life I might always expect to tumble into it. This saying of his has been so often confirmed since then, that I now count upon the pitfall quite as a matter of certainty. Very

Mere luck.

frequently I have escaped it, but more by good luck than good management. Sometimes I have tumbled into it, and when this misfortune occurred it has not unfrequently been in consequence of having acted upon the advice of some very knowing and experienced person indeed. We have all read, when we were boys, Captain Marryat's "Midshipman Easy." There is a passage in that story which may serve as an illustration of what is constantly happening in actual life. The boats of the *Harpy* were ordered to board one of the enemy's vessels; young Easy was in command of one of these boats, and as they had to wait he began to fish. After they had received the order to advance, he delayed a little to catch his fish, and this delay not only saved him from being sunk by the enemy's broadside, but enabled him to board the Frenchman. Here the pitfall was avoided by idling away a minute of time on an occasion when minutes were like hours; yet it was mere luck, not wisdom, which led to the good result. There was a sad railway accident on one of the continental lines last autumn; a notable personage would have been in the train if he had arrived in time for it, but his miscalculation saved him. In matters

where there is no risk of the loss of life, but only of the waste of a portion of it in unprofitable employment, it frequently happens that procrastination, which is reputed to be the thief of time, becomes its best preserver. Suppose that you undertake an enterprise, but defer the execution of it from day to day: it is quite possible that in the interval some fact may accidentally come to your knowledge which would cause a great modification of your plan, or even its complete abandonment. Every thinking person is well aware that the enormous loss of time caused by the friction of our legislative machinery has preserved the country from a great deal of crude and ill-digested legislation. Even Napoleon the Great, who had a rapidity of conception and of action so far surpassing that of other kings and commanders that it seems to us almost supernatural, said that when you did not quite know what ought to be done it was best to do nothing at all. One of the most distinguished of living painters said exactly the same thing with reference to the practice of his art, and added that very little time would be needed for the actual execution of a picture if only the artist knew beforehand how and where to lay the colour. It so often happens that mere activity is a waste of time, that people who have a morbid habit of being busy are often terrible time-wasters, whilst, on the contrary, those who are judiciously deliberate, and allow themselves intervals of leisure, see the way before them in those intervals, and save time by the accuracy of their calculations.

Use of retarding friction.

Napoleon I.

Waste in mere activity.

A largely intelligent thrift of time is necessary to all great works—and many works are very great indeed relatively to the energies of a single individual, which pass unperceived in the tumult of the world. The

Time-thrift necessary in great works.

PART IV. LETTER II. — *Gothic architecture*

advantages of calculating time are artistic as well as economical. I think that, in this respect, magnificent as are the cathedrals which the Gothic builders have left us, they committed an artistic error in the very immensity of their plans. They do not appear to have reflected that from the continual changes of fashion in architecture, incongruous work would be sure to intrude itself before their gigantic projects could be realized by the generations that were to succeed them. For a work of that kind to possess artistic unity, it ought to be completely realized within the space of forty years. How great is the charm of those perfect edifices which, like the Sainte Chapelle, are the realization of one sublime idea! And those changes in national thought which have made the old cathedrals a jumble of incongruous styles, have their parallel in the life of every individual workman. We change from year to year, and any work which occupies us for very long will be wanting in unity of manner.

Incongruous styles.

Men are apt enough of themselves to fall into the most astonishing delusions about the opportunities which time affords, but they are even more deluded by the talk of the people about them. When children hear that a new carriage has been ordered of the builder, they expect to see it driven up to the door in a fortnight, with the paint quite dry on the panels. All people are children in this respect, except the workman, who knows the endless details of production; and the workman himself, notwithstanding the lessons of experience, makes light of the future task. What gigantic plans we scheme, and how little we advance in the labour of a day! Three pages of the book (to be half erased to-morrow), a bit of drapery in the picture that will probably have to be done over again, the imperceptible removal of an ounce of marble-

Childish delusions.

Limited plans.

dust from the statue that seems as if it never would be finished ; so much from dawn to twilight has been the accomplishment of the golden hours. If there is one lesson which experience teaches, surely it is this, to make plans that are strictly limited, and to arrange our work in a practicable way within the limits that we must accept. Others expect so much from us that it seems as if we had accomplished nothing. "What ! have you done only that?" they say, or we know by their looks that they are thinking it.

Illusions about reading.

The most illusory of all the work that we propose to ourselves is reading. It seems so easy to read, that we intend, in the indefinite future, to master the vastest literatures. We cannot bring ourselves to admit that the library we have collected is in great part closed to us simply by want of time. A dear friend of mine, who was a solicitor with a large practice, indulged in wonderful illusions about reading, and collected several thousand volumes, all fine editions, but he died without having cut their leaves. I like the university habit of making reading a business, and estimating the mastery of a few authors as a just title to consideration for scholarship. I should like very well to be shut up in a garden for a whole summer with no literature but the "Faëry Queene," and one year I very nearly realized that project, but publishers and the postman interfered with it. After all, this business of reading ought to be less illusory than most others, for printers divide books into pages, which they number, so that, with a moderate skill in arithmetic, one ought to be able to foresee the limits of his possibilities. There is another observation which may be suggested, and that is to take note of the time required for reading different languages. We read very slowly

PART IV. LETTER II.

Time lost in grammars and dictionaries.

when the language is imperfectly mastered, and we need the dictionary, whereas in the native tongue we see the whole page almost at a glance, as if it were a picture. People whose time for reading is limited ought not to waste it in grammars and dictionaries, but to confine themselves resolutely to a couple of languages, or three at the very utmost, notwithstanding the contempt of polyglots, who estimate your learning by the variety of your tongues. It is a fearful throwing away of time, from the literary point of view, to begin more languages than you can master or retain, and to be always puzzling yourself about irregular verbs.

Thrift not avarice.

All plans for sparing time in intellectual matters ought, however, to proceed upon the principle of thrift, and not upon the principle of avarice. The object of the thrifty man in money matters is so to lay out his money as to get the best possible result from his expenditure; the object of the avaricious man is to spend no more money than he can help. An artist who taught me painting often repeated a piece of advice which is valuable in other things than art, and which I try to remember whenever patience fails. He used to say to me, "*Give it time.*" The mere length of time that we bestow upon our work is in itself a most important element of success, and if I object to the use of languages that we only half know, it is not because it takes us a long time to get through a chapter, but because we are compelled to think about syntax and conjugations which did not in the least occupy the mind of the author, when we ought rather to be thinking about those things which *did* occupy his mind, about the events which he narrated, or the characters that he imagined or described. There are, in truth, only two ways of impressing anything

"Give it time."

Intensity and duration.

on the memory, either intensity or duration. If you saw a man struck down by an assassin, you would remember the occurrence all your life; but to remember with equal vividness a picture of the assassination, you would probably be obliged to spend a month or two in copying it. The subjects of our studies rarely produce an intensity of emotion sufficient to ensure perfect recollection without the expenditure of time. And when your object is not to learn, but to produce, it is well to bear in mind that everything requires a certain definite time-outlay, which *cannot* be reduced without an inevitable injury to quality. A most experienced artist, a man of the very rarest executive ability, wrote to me the other day about a set of designs I had suggested. "If I could but get the TIME,"—the large capitals are his own,—"for, somehow or other, let a design be never so studiously simple in the masses, it *will* fill itself as it goes on, like the weasel in the fable who got into the meal-tub; and when the pleasure begins in attempting tone and mystery and intricacy, *away go the hours at a gallop.*" A well-known and very successful English dramatist wrote to me: "When I am hurried, and have undertaken more work than I can execute in the time at my disposal, I am always perfectly paralysed."

Galloping hours.

There is another side to this subject which deserves attention. Some men work best under the sense of pressure. Simple compression evolves heat from iron, so that there is a flash of fire when a ball hits the side of an ironclad. The same law seems to hold good in the intellectual life of man, whenever he needs the stimulus of extraordinary excitement. Rossini positively advised a young composer never to write his overture until the evening before the first performance. "Nothing,"

The sense of pressure.

Rossini.

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Rossini.

he said, "excites inspiration like necessity; the presence of a copyist waiting for your work, and the view of a manager in despair tearing out his hair by handfuls. In Italy in my time all the managers were bald at thirty. I composed the overture to 'Othello' in a small room in the Barbaja Palace, where the baldest and most ferocious of managers had shut me up by force with nothing but a dish of maccaroni, and the threat that I should not leave the place alive until I had written the last note. I wrote the overture to the 'Gazza Ladra' on the day of the first performance, in the upper loft of the La Scala, where I had been confined by the manager, under the guard of four scene-shifters who had orders to throw my text out of the window bit by bit to copyists, who were waiting below to transcribe it. In default of music I was to be thrown out myself."

I have quoted the best instance known to me of this voluntary seeking after pressure, but striking as it is, even this instance does not weaken what I said before. For observe, that although Rossini deferred the composition of his overture till the evening before the first performance, he knew very well that he could do it thoroughly in the time. He was like a clever schoolboy who knows that he can learn his lesson in the quarter of an hour before the class begins; or he was like an orator who knows that he can deliver a passage and compose at the same time the one which is to follow, so that he prefers to arrange his speech in the presence of his audience. Since Rossini always allowed himself all the time that was necessary for what he had to do, it is clear that he did not sin against the great time-necessity. The express which can travel from London to Edinburgh in a night may leave the English metropolis on Saturday evening

Time enough.

although it is due in Scotland on Sunday, and still act with the strictest consideration about time. The blameable error lies in miscalculation, and not in rapidity of performance.

Waste of time by miscalculation.

Nothing *wastes* time like miscalculation. It negatives all results. It is the parent of incompleteness, the great author of the Unfinished and the Unserviceable. Almost every intellectual man has laid out great masses of time on five or six different branches of knowledge which are not of the least use to him, simply because he has not carried them far enough, and could not carry them far enough in the time he had to give. Yet this might have been ascertained at the beginning by the simplest arithmetical calculation. The experience of students in all departments of knowledge has quite definitely ascertained the amount of time that is necessary for success in them, and the successful student can at once inform the aspirant how far he is likely to travel along the road. What is the use, to anybody, of having just enough skill to feel vexed with himself that he has no more, and yet angry at other people for not admiring the little that he possesses?

Calculating for short and long spaces.

I wish to direct your attention to a cause which more than any other produces disappointment in ordinary intellectual pursuits. It is this. People can often calculate with the utmost accuracy what they can accomplish in ten minutes or even in ten hours, and yet the very same persons will make the most absurd miscalculations about what they can accomplish in ten years. There is of course a reason for this: if there were not, so many sensible people would not suffer from the delusion. The reason is, that owing to the habits of human life there is a certain elasticity in large spaces of time that include

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nights, and meal-times, and holidays. We fancy that we shall be able, by working harder than we have been accustomed to work, and by stealing hours from all the different kinds of rest and amusement, to accomplish far more in the ten years that are to come than we have ever actually accomplished in the same space. And to a certain extent this may be very true. No doubt a man whose mind has become seriously aware of the vast importance of economizing his time will economize it better than he did in the days before the new conviction came to him. No doubt, after skill in our work has been confirmed, we shall perform it with increased speed.

The elasticity of time.

But the elasticity of time is rather that of leather than that of india-rubber. There is certainly a degree of elasticity, but the degree is strictly limited. The true master of time-thrift would be no more liable to illusion about years than about hours, and would act as prudently when working for remote results as for near ones.

Not that we ought to work as if we were always under severe pressure. Little books are occasionally published in which we are told that it is a sin to lose a minute. From the intellectual point of view this doctrine is simply stupid. What the Philistines call wasted time is often rich in the most varied experience to the intelligent.

Value of idle hours.

If all that we have learned in idle moments could be suddenly expelled from our minds by some chemical process, it is probable that they would be worth very little afterwards. What, after such a process, would have remained to Shakespeare, Scott, Cervantes, Thackeray, Dickens, Hogarth, Goldsmith, Molière? When these great students of human nature were learning most, the sort of people who write the foolish little books just alluded to would have wanted to send them home to

the dictionary or the desk. Töpffer and Claude Tillier, both men of delicate and observant genius, attached the greatest importance to hours of idleness. Töpffer said that a year of downright loitering was a desirable element in a liberal education; whilst Claude Tillier went even farther, and boldly affirmed that "le temps le mieux employé est celui que l'on perd."

Tillier.

Let us not think too contemptuously of the miscalculators of time, since not one of us is exempt from their folly. We have all made miscalculations, or more frequently have simply omitted calculation altogether, preferring childish illusion to a manly examination of realities; and afterwards as life advances another illusion steals over us not less vain than the early one, but bitter as that was sweet. We now begin to reproach ourselves with all the opportunities that have been neglected, and now our folly is to imagine that we might have done impossible wonders if we had only exercised a little resolution. We might have been thorough classical scholars, and spoken all the great modern languages, and written immortal books, and made a colossal fortune. Miscalculations again, and these the most imbecile of all; for the youth who forgets to reason in the glow of happiness and hope, is wiser than the man who overestimates what was once possible that he may embitter the days which remain to him.

The illusion of youth.

The illusion of maturity.

LETTER III.

TO A MAN OF BUSINESS WHO DESIRED TO MAKE HIMSELF BETTER ACQUAINTED WITH LITERATURE, BUT WHOSE TIME FOR READING WAS LIMITED.

Victor Jacquemont on the intellectual labours of the Germans—Business may be set off as the equivalent to one of their pursuits—Necessity for regularity in the economy of time—What may be done in two hours a day—Evils of interruption—Florence Nightingale—Real nature of interruption—Instance from the Apology of Socrates.

Victor Jacquemont.

In the charming and precious letters of Victor Jacquemont, a man whose life was dedicated to culture, and who not only lived for it, but died for it, there is a passage about the intellectual labours of Germans, which takes due account of the expenditure of time. "Comme j'étais étonné," he says, "de la prodigieuse variété et de l'étendue de connaissances des Allemands, je demandai un jour à l'un de mes amis, Saxon de naissance et l'un des premiers géologues de l'Europe, comment ses compatriotes s'y prenaient pour savoir tant de choses. Voici sa réponse, à peu près: 'Un Allemand (moi excepté qui suis le plus paresseux des hommes) se lève de bonne heure, été et hiver, à cinq heures environ. Il travaille quatre heures avant le déjeuner, fumant quelquefois pendant tout ce temps, sans que cela nuise à son application. Son déjeuner dure une demi-heure, et il reste, après, une autre demi-heure à causer avec sa femme et à faire jouer ses enfants. Il retourne au travail pour six heures; dîne sans se presser; fume une heure après le dîner, jouant encore avec ses enfants; et avant de se coucher il tra-

German workers.

vaille encore quatre heures. Il recommence tous les jours, ne sortant jamais.—Voilà,' me dit mon ami, 'comment Oersted, le plus grand physicien de l'Allemagne, en est aussi le plus grand médecin ; voilà comment Kant le métaphysicien était un des plus savants astronomes de l'Europe, et comment Goethe, qui en est actuellement le premier littérateur, dans presque tous les genres, et le plus fécond, est excellent botaniste, minéralogiste, physicien.'" [1]

Discouragement and encouragement.

Here is something to encourage, and something to discourage you at the same time. The number of hours which these men have given in order to become what they were, is so great as to be past all possibility of imitation by a man occupied in business. It is clear that, with your counting-house to occupy you during the best hours of every day, you can never labour for your intel-

Quotation from Victor Jacquemont.

[1] "Being astonished at the prodigious variety and at the extent of knowledge possessed by the Germans, I begged one of my friends, Saxon by birth, and one of the foremost geologists in Europe, to tell me how his countrymen managed to know so many things. Here is his answer, nearly in his own words :—'A German (except myself, who am the idlest of men) gets up early, summer and winter, at about five o'clock. He works four hours before breakfast, sometimes smoking all the time, which does not interfere with his application. His breakfast lasts half an hour, and he remains, afterwards, another half-hour talking with his wife and playing with his children. He returns to his work for six hours, dines without hurrying himself, smokes an hour after dinner, playing again with his children, and before he goes to bed he works four hours more. He begins again every day, and never goes out. This is how it comes to pass that Oersted, the greatest natural philospher in Germany, is at the same time the greatest physician ; this is how Kant the metaphysician was one of the most learned astronomers in Europe, and how Goethe, who is at present the first and most fertile author in Germany in almost all kinds of literature, is an excellent botanist, mineralogist, and natural philosopher.'"

Effects of interruption on the sick

tinue occupations requiring much thinking, the injury is doubly great. In feeding a patient suffering under delirium or stupor you may suffocate him by giving him his food suddenly, but if you rub his lips gently with a spoon and thus attract his attention, he will swallow the food unconsciously, but with perfect safety. Thus it is with the brain. If you offer it a thought, especially one requiring a decision, abruptly, you do it a real, not fanciful, injury. Never speak to a sick person suddenly; but, at the same time, do not keep his expectation on the tiptoe."

To this you will already have answered, mentally, that you are not a patient suffering under either delirium or stupor, and that nobody needs to rub your lips gently with a spoon. But Miss Nightingale does not consider interruption baneful to sick persons only.

On the healthy also.

"This rule indeed," she continues, "applies to the well quite as much as to the sick. *I have never known persons who exposed themselves for years to constant interruption who did not muddle away their intellects by it at last.* The process, with them, may be accomplished without pain. With the sick, pain gives warning of the injury."

Different kinds of interruption.

Interruption is an evil to the reader which must be estimated very differently from ordinary business interruptions. The great question about interruption is not whether it compels you to divert your attention to other facts, but whether it compels you to tune your whole mind to another diapason. Shopkeepers are incessantly compelled to change the subject; a stationer is asked for notepaper one minute, for sealing-wax the next, and immediately afterwards for a particular sort of steel pen. The subjects of his thoughts are changed very rapidly, but the general state of his mind is not changed; he is

always strictly in his shop, as much mentally as physically. When an attorney is interrupted in the study of a case by the arrival of a client who asks him questions about another case, the change is more difficult to bear; yet even here the general state of mind, the legal state of mind, is not interfered with. But now suppose a reader perfectly absorbed in his author, an author belonging very likely to another age and another civilization entirely different from ours. Suppose that you are reading the Defence of Socrates in Plato, and have the whole scene before you as in a picture: the tribunal of the Five Hundred, the pure Greek architecture, the interested Athenian public, the odious Melitus, the envious enemies, the beloved and grieving friends whose names are dear to us, and immortal; and in the centre you see one figure draped like a poor man, in cheap and common cloth, that he wears winter and summer, with a face plain to downright ugliness, but an air of such genuine courage and self-possession that no acting could imitate it; and you hear the firm voice saying—

Interruption in reading.

Instance from Plato.

Τ·μᾶται δ' οὖν μοι ἀνὴρ θανάτου.
Εἶεν.[1]

You are just beginning the splendid paragraph where Socrates condemns himself to maintenance in the Prytaneum, and if you can only be safe from interruption till it is finished, you will have one of those minutes of noble pleasure which are the rewards of intellectual toil. But if you are reading in the daytime in a house where there are women and children, or where people can fasten upon you for pottering details of business, you may be sure that you will *not* be able to get to the

[1] The man, then, judges me worthy of death. Be it so.

PART IV. LETTER III. *Interruption.*

end of the passage without in some way or other being rudely awakened from your dream, and suddenly brought back into the common world. The loss intellectually is greater than anyone who had not suffered from it could imagine. People think that an interruption is merely the unhooking of an electric chain, and that the current will flow, when the chain is hooked on again, just as it did before. To the intellectual and imaginative student an interruption is not that; it is the destruction of a picture.

LETTER IV.

LETTER IV.

TO A STUDENT WHO FELT HURRIED AND DRIVEN.

People who like to be hurried—Sluggish temperaments gain vivacity under pressure—Routine work may be done at increased speed—The higher intellectual work cannot be done hurriedly—The art of avoiding hurry consists in *Selection*—How it was practised by a good landscape painter—Selection in reading and writing—Some studies allow the play of selection more than others do—Languages permit it less than natural sciences—Difficulty of using selection in the fulfilment of literary engagements.

So you have got yourself into that pleasant condition which is about as agreeable, and as favourable to fruitful study and observation, as the condition of an over-driven cab-horse!

Uses of hurry.

Very indolent men, who will not work at all unless under the pressure of immediate urgency, sometimes tell us that they actually like to be hurried; but although certain kinds of practical work which have become perfectly easy from habit may be got through at a great pace when the workman feels that there is an immediate

necessity for effort, it is certainly not true that hurry is favourable to sound study of any kind. Work which merely runs in a fixed groove may be urged on occasionally at express speed without any perceptible injury to the quality of it. A clever violinist can play a passage *prestissimo* as correctly as if he played it *adagio*; a banker's clerk can count money very rapidly with positively less risk of error than if he counted it as you and I do. A person of sluggish temperament really gains in vivacity when he is pressed for time, and becomes during those moments of excited energy a clearer-headed and more able person than he is under ordinary circumstances. It is therefore not surprising that he should find himself able to accomplish more under the great stimulus of an immediate necessity than he is able to do in the dulness of his every-day existence. Great prodigies of labour have been performed in this way to avert impending calamity, especially by military officers in critical times like those of the Sepoy rebellion; and in the obscurer lives of tradesmen, immense exertions are often made to avert the danger of bankruptcy, when without the excitement of a serious anxiety of that kind the tradesman would not feel capable of more than a moderate and reasonable degree of attention to his affairs. But notwithstanding the many instances of this kind which might be cited, and the many more which might easily be collected, the truth remains that the highest kinds of intellectual labour can hardly ever be properly performed when the degree of pressure is in the least excessive. You may, for example, if you have the kind of ability which makes a good journalist, write an effective leader with your watch lying on the table, and finish it exactly when the time is up; but if you had the kind of

Vivacity gained under pressure.

Prodigies of labour under pressure

The highest intellectual labour.

PART IV. LETTER IV.

very little selection indeed, since you must know the whole vocabulary, or nearly so, to be able to read and speak. On the other hand, the natural sciences permit the most prudent exercise of selection. For example, in botany you may study as few plants as you choose.

Selection in writing.

In writing, the art of selection consists in giving the utmost effect to expression in the fewest words; but of this art I say little, for who can contend against an inevitable trade-necessity? Almost every author of ordinary skill could, when pressed for time, find a briefer expression for his thoughts, but the real difficulty in fulfilling literary engagements does not lie in the expression of the thought, it lies in the sufficiently rapid production of a certain quantity of copy. For this purpose I fear that selection would be of very little use—of no more use, in fact, than in any other branch of manufacture where (if a certain standard is kept up to) quantity in sale is more important than quality of material.

LETTER V.

LETTER V.

TO A FRIEND WHO, THOUGH HE HAD NO PROFESSION, COULD NOT FIND TIME FOR HIS VARIOUS INTELLECTUAL PURSUITS.

Compensations resulting from the necessity for time—Opportunity only exists for us so far as we have time to make use of it—This *or* that, not this *and* that—Danger of apparently unlimited opportunities—The intellectual training of our ancestors—Montaigne the Essayist—Reliance upon the compensations.

Compensation

IT has always seemed to me that the great and beautiful principle of compensation is more clearly seen in the distribution and effects of time than in anything else within the scope of our experience. The good use of

one opportunity very frequently compensates us for the absence of another, and it does so because opportunity is itself so dependent upon time that, although the best opportunities may apparently be presented to us, we can make no use of them unless we are able to give them the time that they require. You, who have the best possible opportunities for culture, find a certain sadness and disappointment because you cannot avail yourself of all of them; but the truth is, that opportunity only exists for us just so far as we are able to make use of it, and our power to do so is often nothing but a question of time. If our days are well employed we are sure to have done some good thing which we should have been compelled to neglect if we had been occupied about anything else. Hence every genuine worker has rich compensations which ought to console him amply for his shortcomings, and to enable him to meet comparisons without fear.

Time and opportunity.

Those who aspire to the intellectual life, but have no experience of its difficulties, very frequently envy men so favourably situated as you are. It seems to them that all the world's knowledge is accessible to you, and that you have simply to cull its fruits as we gather grapes in a vineyard. They forget the power of Time, and the restrictions which Time imposes. "This *or* that, not this *and* that," is the rule to which all of us have to submit, and it strangely equalizes the destinies of men. The time given to the study of one thing is withdrawn from the study of another, and the hours of the day are limited alike for all of us. How difficult it is to reconcile the interests of our different pursuits! Indeed it seems like a sort of polygamy to *have* different pursuits. It is natural to think of them as jealous wives tormenting some Mormon prophet.

Restrictions imposed by time.

PART V.

THE INFLUENCES OF MONEY.

LETTER I.

TO A VERY RICH STUDENT.

PART V. LETTER I.

The author of "Vathek"—The double temptation of wealth—Rich men tempted to follow occupations in which their wealth is useful—Pressure of social duties on the rich—The Duchess of Orleans—The rich man's time not his own—The rich may help the general intellectual advancement by the exercise of patronage—Dr. Carpenter—Franz Wœpke.

The author of "Vathek."

It has always seemed to me a very remarkable and noteworthy circumstance that although Mr. Beckford, the author of "Vathek," produced in his youth a story which bears all the signs of true inventive genius, he never produced anything in after-life which posterity cares to preserve. I read "Vathek" again quite recently, to see how far my early enthusiasm for it might have been due to that passion for orientalism which reigned amongst us many years ago, but this fresh perusal left an impression which only genius leaves. Beckford really had invention, and an extraordinary narrative power. That such faculties, after having once revealed themselves, should contentedly have remained dormant ever afterwards, is one

of the most curious facts in the history of the human mind, and it is the more curious that Beckford lived to a very advanced age.

Beckford's case appears to have been one of those in which great wealth diminishes or wholly paralyses the highest energy of the intellect, leaving the lower energies free to exert less noble kinds of activity. A refined self-indulgence became the habit of his life, and he developed simply into a dilettant. Even his love for the fine arts did not rise above the indulgence of an elegant and cultivated taste. Although he lived at the very time most favourable to the appearance of a great critic in architecture and painting, the time of a great architectural revival and of the growth of a vigorous and independent school of contemporary art, he exercised no influence beyond that of a wealthy virtuoso. His love of the beautiful began and ended in simple personal gratification; it led to no noble labour, to no elevating severity of discipline. Englishman though he was, he filled his Oriental tower with masterpieces from Italy and Holland, only to add form and colour to the luxuries of his reverie, behind his gilded lattices.

His dilettantism.

And when he raised that other tower at Fonthill, and the slaves of the lamp toiled at it by torchlight to gratify his Oriental impatience, he exercised no influence upon the confusion of his epoch more durable than that hundred yards of masonry which sank into a shapeless heap whilst as yet Azrael spared its author. He to whom Nature and Fortune had been so prodigal of their gifts, he whom Reynolds painted and Mozart instructed, who knew the poets of seven literatures, culling their jewels like flowers in seven enchanted gardens—he to whom the palaces of knowledge all opened their golden gates even

His gifts and powers.

PART V. LETTER I.

Beckford.

in his earliest youth, to whom were also given riches and length of days, for whom a thousand craftsmen toiled in Europe and a thousand slaves beyond the sea,[1]—what has this gifted mortal left as the testimony of his power, as the trace of his fourscore years upon the earth? Only the reminiscence of a vague splendour, like the fast-fading recollection of a cloud that burned at sunset, and one small gem of intellectual creation that lives like a tiny star.

Two kinds of temptations in great wealth.

If wealth had only pleasure to offer as a temptation from intellectual labour, its influence would be easier to resist. Men of the English race are often grandly strong in resistance to every form of voluptuousness; the race is fond of comfort and convenience, but it does not sacrifice its energy to enervating self-indulgence. There is, however, another order of temptations in great wealth, to which Englishmen not only yield, but yield with a satisfied conscience, even with a sense of obedience to duty. Wealth carries pleasure in her left hand, but in her right she bears honour and power. The rich man feels that he can do so much by the mere exercise of his command over the labour of others, and so little by any unaided labour of his own, that he is always strongly tempted to become, not only physically but intellectually, a director of work rather than a workman. Even his modesty, when he is modest, tends to foster his reliance on others rather than himself. All that he tries to do is done so much better by those who make it their

[1] This sounds like a poetical exaggeration, but it is less than the bare truth. There were fifteen hundred slaves on two West Indian estates that Beckford lost in a lawsuit. It is quite certain, considering his lavish expenditure, that fully a thousand men must have worked for the maintenance of his luxury in Europe. So much for his command of labour.

profession, that he is always tempted to fall back upon his paying power as his most satisfactory and effective force. There are cases in which this temptation is gloriously overcome, where men of great wealth compel everyone to acknowledge that their money is nothing more than a help to their higher life, like the charger that bore Wellington at Waterloo, serving him indeed usefully, but not detracting from the honour which is his due. But in these cases the life is usually active or administrative rather than intellectual. The rich man does not generally feel tempted to enter upon careers in which his command over labour is not an evident advantage, and this because men naturally seek those fields in which *all* their superiorities tell. Even the well-known instance of Lord Rosse can scarcely be considered an exception to this rule, for although he was eminent in a science which has been followed by poor men with great distinction, his wealth was of use in the construction of his colossal telescope, which gave him a clear advantage over merely professional contemporaries.

Wealth used as a help.

Lord Rosse.

Besides this natural desire to pursue careers in which their money may lessen the number of competitors, the rich are often diverted from purely intellectual pursuits by the social duties of their station, duties which it is impossible to avoid and difficult to keep within limits. The Duchess of Orleans (mother of the present Count of Paris) arranged her time with the greatest care so as to reserve a little of it for her own culture in uninterrupted solitude. By an exact system, and the exercise of the rarest firmness, she contrived to steal half an hour here and an hour there—enough no doubt, when employed as she employed them, to maintain her character as a very distinguished lady, yet still far from

Social duties of the rich.

PART V. LETTER I.

sufficient for the satisfactory pursuit of any great art or science. If it be difficult for the rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven, it is also difficult for him to secure that freedom from interruption which is necessary to fit him for his entrance into the Intellectual Kingdom. He can scarcely allow himself to be absorbed in any great study, when he reflects on all the powerful means of social influence which he is suffering to lie idle. He is sure to possess by inheritance, or to have acquired in obedience to custom, a complicated and expensive machinery for the pleasures and purposes of society. There is game to be shot; there are hunters to be exercised; great houses to be filled with guests. So much is expected of the rich man, both in business and in pleasure, that his time is not his own, and he could not quit his station if he would. And yet the Intellectual Life, in its fruitful perfection, requires, I do not say the complete abandonment of the world, but it assuredly requires free and frequent spaces of labour in tranquil solitude, "retreats" like those commanded by the Church of Rome, but with more of study and less of contemplation.

Machinery for pleasure.

Retreats.

It would be useless to ask you to abdicate your power, and retreat into some hermitage with a library and a laboratory, without a thought of returning to your pleasant hall in Yorkshire and your house in Mayfair. You will not sell all and follow the Light, but there is a life which you may powerfully encourage, yet only partially share. Notwithstanding the increased facilities for earning a living which this age offers to the intellectual, the time that they are often compelled to give to the satisfaction of common material necessities is so much time withdrawn from the work which they alone can do It

is a lamentable waste of the highest and rarest kind of energy to compel minds that are capable of original investigation, of discovery, to occupy themselves in that mere vulgarization of knowledge, in popular lecturing and literature, which could be done just as efficiently by minds of a common order. It is an error of the present age to believe that the time for what is called patronage is altogether passed away. Let me mention two instances to the contrary: one in which kindly help would have saved fifteen years of a noble life; another in which that kindly help did actually permit a man of exceptional endowment and equally exceptional industry to pursue investigations for which no other human being was so well qualified, and which were entirely incompatible with the earning of the daily bread. Dr. Carpenter has lately told us that, finding it impossible to unite the work of a general practitioner with the scientific researches upon which his heart was set, he gave up nine-tenths of his time for twenty years to popular lecturing and writing, in order that he might exist and devote the other tenth to science. "Just as he was breaking down from the excessive strain upon mind and body which this life involved, an appointment was offered to Dr. Carpenter which gave him competence and sufficient leisure for the investigations which he has conducted to such important issues." Suppose that during those twenty years of struggle he *had* broken down like many another only a little less robust—what then? A mind lost to his country and the world. And would it not have been happier for him and for us if some of those men (of whom there are more in England than in any other land) who are so wealthy that their gold is positively a burden and an encumbrance like too many coats in summer, had helped Dr. Car-

Patronage

Dr. Carpenter,

His early labours and difficulties

PART V. LETTER I.

penter at least a few years earlier, in some form that a man of high feeling might honourably accept? The other example that I shall mention is that of Franz Wœpke, the mathematician and orientalist. A modest pension, supplied by an Italian prince who was interested in the history of mathematics, gave Wœpke that peace which is incompatible with poverty, and enabled him to live grandly in his narrow lodging the noble intellectual life. Was not this rightly and well done, and probably a much more effectual employment of the power of gold than if that Italian prince had added some rare manuscripts to his own library without having time or knowledge to decipher them? I cannot but think that the rich may serve the cause of culture best by a judicious exercise of patronage—unless, indeed, they have within themselves the sense of that irresistible vocation which made Humboldt use his fortune as the servant of his high ambition. The Humboldts never are too rich; they possess their gold and are not possessed by it, and they are exempt from the duty of aiding others because they themselves have a use for all their powers.

Franz Wœpke.

Humboldt.

LETTER II.

TO A GENIUS CARELESS IN MONEY MATTERS.

Danger of carelessness—Inconveniences of poverty unfavourable to the Intellectual Life—Necessity advances men in industrial occupations, but disturbs and interrupts the higher intellectual life—Instances in science, literature, and art—Careers aided by wealth—Mr. Ruskin—De Saussure—Work spoiled by poverty in the doing—The central passion of men of ability is to do their work well—The want of money the most common hindrance to excellence of work—De Sénancour—Bossuet—Sainte-Beuve—Shelley—Wordsworth—Scott—Kepler—Tycho Brahe—Schiller—Goethe—Case of an eminent English philosopher, and of a French writer of school-primers—Loss of time in making experiments on public taste—*Surtout ne pas trop écrire*—Auguste Comte—The reaction of the intellectual against money-making—Money the protector of the intellectual life.

I HAVE been anxious for you lately, and venture to write to you about the reasons for this anxiety.

You are neither extravagant nor self-indulgent, yet it seems to me that your entire absorption in the higher intellectual pursuits has produced in you, as it frequently does, a carelessness about material interests of all kinds which is by far the most dangerous of all tempers to the pecuniary well-being of a man. Sydney Smith declared that no fortune could stand that temper long, and that we are on the high road to ruin the moment we think ourselves rich enough to be careless.

Carelessness of material interests.

Let me observe, to begin with, that although the pursuit of wealth is not favourable to the intellectual life, the inconveniences of poverty are even less favourable to it. We are sometimes lectured on the great benefits of necessity as a stimulant to exertion, and it is implied

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that comfortable people would go much farther on the road to distinction if they were made uncomfortable by having to think perpetually about money. Those who say this confound together the industry of the industrial and professional classes, and the labours of the more purely intellectual. It is clear that when the labour a man does is of such a nature that he will be paid for it in strict proportion to the time and effort he bestows, the need of money will be a direct stimulus to the best exertion he may be capable of. In all simply industrial occupations the need of money *does* drive a man forwards, and is often, when he feels it in early life, the very origin and foundation of his fortune. There exists, in such occupations, a perfect harmony between the present necessity and the ultimate purpose of the life. Wealth is the object of industry, and the first steps towards the possession of it are steps on the chosen path. The future captain of industry, who will employ thousands of workpeople and accumulate millions of money, is going straight to his splendid future when he gets up at five in the morning to work in another person's factory. To learn to be a builder of steam-vessels, it is necessary, even when you begin with capital, to pass through the manual trades, and you will only learn them the better if the wages are necessary to your existence. Poverty in these cases only makes an intelligent man ground himself all the better in that stern practical training which is the basis of his future career. Well, therefore, may those who have reached distinguished success in fields of practical activity extol the teachings of adversity. If it is a necessary part of your education that you should hammer rivets inside a steam-boiler, it is as well that your early habits should not be over-dainty. So it is

Need in industrial occupations.

Cases where poverty is a good teacher.

observed that horny hands, in the colonies, get gold into them sooner than white ones.

Good effects of immediate necessity.

Even in the liberal professions young men get on all the better for not being too comfortably off. If you have a comfortable private income to begin with, the meagre early rewards of professional life will seem too paltry to be worth hard striving, and so you will very likely miss the more ample rewards of maturity, since the common road to success is nothing but a gradual increase. And you miss education at the same time, for practice is the best of professional educators, and many successful lawyers and artists have had scarcely any other training. The daily habit of affairs trains men for the active business of the world, and if the purpose of their lives is merely to do what they are doing or to command others to do the same things, the more closely circumstances tie them down to their work, the better.

Bad effects of it in other circumstances.

But in the higher intellectual pursuits the necessity for immediate earning has an entirely different result. It comes, not as an educator, but as an interruption or suspension of education. All intellectual lives, however much they may differ in the variety of their purposes, have at least this purpose in common, that they are mainly devoted to self-education of one kind or another. An intellectual man who is forty years old is as much at schoo. as an Etonian of fourteen, and if you set him to earn more money than that which comes to him without especial care about it, you interrupt his schooling, exactly as selfish parents used to do when they sent their young children to the factory and prevented them from learning to read. The idea of the intellectual life is an existence passed almost entirely in study, yet preserving the results of its investigations. A day's writing will

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Pernicious effects of necessity.

usually suffice to record the outcome of a month's research.

Necessity, instead of advancing your studies, stops them. Whenever her harsh voice speaks it becomes your duty to shut your books, put aside your instruments, and do something that will fetch a price in the market. The man of science has to abandon the pursuit of a discovery to go and deliver a popular lecture a hundred miles off, for which he gets five pounds and his railway fare. The student of ancient literature has to read some feeble novel, and give three days of a valuable life to write an anonymous review which will bring him two pounds ten. The artist has to leave his serious picture to manufacture "pot-boilers," which will teach him nothing, but only spoil his hands and vitiate the public taste. The poet suspends his poem (which is promised to a publisher for Christmas, and will be spoiled in consequence by hurry at the last) in order to write newspaper articles on subjects of which he has little knowledge and in which he takes no interest. And yet there are instances of those comparatively happy and fortunate needy who are only compelled to suspend their intellectual life, and who can cheer themselves in their enforced labour with the hope of shortly renewing it. What of those others who are pushed out of their path for ever by the buffets of unkindly fortune? Many a fine intellect has been driven into the deep quagmire, and has struggled in it vainly till death came, which but for that grim necessity might have scaled the immortal mountains.

This metaphor of the mountain has led me, by a natural association of ideas, to think of a writer who has added to our enjoyment of their beauty, and I think of him the more readily that his career will serve as an

Advantages of wealth in the case of Mr. Ruskin.

illustration—far better than any imaginary career—of the very subject which just now occupies my mind. Mr. Ruskin is not only one of the best instances, but he is positively the very best instance except the two Humboldts, of an intellectual career which has been greatly aided by material prosperity, and which would not have been possible without it. This does not in the least detract from the merit of the author of "Modern Painters," for it needed a rare force of resolution, or a powerful instinct of genius, to lead the life of a severe student under every temptation to indolence. Still it is true that Mr. Ruskin's career would have been impossible for a poor man, however gifted. A poor man would not have had access to Mr. Ruskin's materials, and one of his chief superiorities has always been an abundant wealth of material. And if we go so far as to suppose that the poor man might have found other materials perhaps equivalent to these, we know that he could not have turned them to that noble use. The poor critic would be immediately absorbed in the ocean of anonymous periodical literature; he could not find time for the incubation of great works. "Modern Painters," the result of seventeen years of study, is not simply a work of genius, but of genius seconded by wealth. Close to it on my shelves stand four volumes which are the monument of another intellectual life devoted to the investigation of nature. De Saussure, whom Mr. Ruskin reverences as one of his ablest teachers, and whom all sincere students of nature regard as a model observer, pursued for many laborious years a kind of life which was not, and could not be, self-supporting in the pecuniary sense. Many other patient labourers, who have not the celebrity of these, work steadily in the same way,

Also in that of De Saussure.

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and are enabled to do so by the possession of independent fortune. I know one such who gives a whole summer to the examination of three or four acres of mountain-ground, the tangible result being comprised in a few memoranda, which, considered as literary material, might (in the hands of a skilled professional writer) just possibly be worth five pounds.

Work spoiled in the execution by pecuniary necessity.

Not only do narrow pecuniary means often render high intellectual enterprises absolutely impossible, but they do what is frequently even more trying to the health and character, they permit you to undertake work that would be worthy of you if you might only have time and materials for the execution of it, and then spoil it in the doing. An intellectual labourer will bear anything except that. You may take away the very table he is writing upon, if you let him have a deal board for his books and papers; you may take away all his fine editions, if you leave him common copies that are legible; you may remove his very candlestick, if you leave him a bottle-neck to stick his candle in, and he will go on working cheerfully still. But the moment you do anything to spoil the quality of the work itself, you make him irritable and miserable. "You think," says Sir Arthur Helps, "to gain a good man to manage your affairs because he happens to have a small share in your undertaking. It is a great error. You want him to do something well which you are going to tell him to do. If he has been wisely chosen, and is an able man, his pecuniary interest in the matter will be mere dust in the balance, when compared with the desire which belongs to all such men to do their work well." Yes, this is the central passion of all men of true ability, *to do their work well;* their happiness lies in that, and not in the amount of

their profits, or even in their reputation. But then, on the other hand, they suffer indescribable mental misery when circumstances compel them to do their work less well than they know that, under more favourable circumstances, they would be capable of doing it. The want of money is, in the higher intellectual pursuits, the most common hindrance to thoroughness and excellence of work. De Sénancour, who, in consequence of a strange concatenation of misfortunes, was all his life struggling in shallows, suffered not from the privations themselves, but from the vague feeling that they stunted his intellectual growth; and any experienced student of human nature must be aware that De Sénancour was right. With larger means he would have seen more of the world, and known it better, and written of it with riper wisdom. He said that the man "who only saw in poverty the direct effect of the money-privation, and only compared, for instance, an eight-penny dinner to one that cost ten shillings, would have no conception of the true nature of misfortune, for not to spend money is the least of the evils of poverty." Bossuet said that he "had no attachment to riches, and still if he had only what is barely necessary, if he felt himself narrowed, he would lose more than half his talents." Sainte-Beuve said, "Only think a little what a difference there is in the starting-point and in the employment of the faculties between a Duc de Luynes and a Sénancour." How many of the most distinguished authors have been dependent upon private means, not simply for physical sustenance, but for the opportunities which they afforded of gaining that experience of life which was absolutely essential to the full growth of their mental faculties. Shelley's writings brought him no profit whatever, and

Bad effects of poverty in the case of De Sénancour.

PART V. LETTER II.

without a private income he could not have produced them, for he had not a hundred buyers. Yet his *whole time* was employed in study or in travel, which for him was study of another kind, or else in the actual labour of composition. Wordsworth tried to become a London journalist and failed. A young man called Raisley Calvert died and left him 900*l.*; this saved the poet in Wordsworth, as it kept him till the publication of the "Lyrical Ballads," and afterwards other pieces of good luck happened to him, so that he could think and compose at leisure. Scott would not venture to devote himself to literature until he had first secured a comfortable income outside of it. Poor Kepler struggled with constant anxieties, and told fortunes by astrology for a livelihood, saying that astrology as the daughter of astronomy ought to keep her mother; but fancy a man of science wasting precious time over horoscopes! "I supplicate you," he writes to Mœstlin, "if there is a situation vacant at Tubingen, do what you can to obtain it for me, and let me know the prices of bread and wine and other necessaries of life, for my wife is not accustomed to live on beans." He had to accept all sorts of jobs; he made almanacks, and served anyone who would pay him. His only tranquil time for study was when he lived in Styria, on his wife's income, a tranquillity that did not last for long, and never returned. How different is this from the princely ease of Tycho Brahe, who laboured for science alone, with all the help that the ingenuity of his age could furnish! There is the same contrast, in a later generation, between Schiller and Goethe. Poor Schiller "wasting so much of his precious life in literary hack-work, translating French books for a miserable pittance;" Goethe, fortunate in his pecuniary

Words-worth.

Scott.

Kepler.

His struggles for bread.

Tycho Brahe.

Schiller and Goethe.

Goethe.

independence as in all the other great circumstances of his life, and this at a time when the pay of authors was so miserable that they could hardly exist by the pen. Schiller got a shilling a page for his translations. Merck the publisher offered three pounds sterling for a drama of Goethe. "If Europe praised me," Goethe said, "what has Europe done for me? Nothing. *Even my works have been an expense to me.*"

The pecuniary rewards which men received for their labour are so absurdly (yet inevitably) disproportionate to the intellectual power that is needed for the task, and also to the toil involved, that no one can safely rely upon the higher intellectual pursuits as a protection from money-anxieties. I will give you two instances of this disproportion, real instances, of men who are known to me personally. One of them is an eminent Englishman of most remarkable intellectual force, who for many years past has occupied his leisure in the composition of works that are valued by the thinking public to a degree which it would be difficult to exaggerate. But this thinking public is not numerous, and so in the year 1866 this eminent philosopher, "unable to continue losing money in endeavouring to enlighten his contemporaries, was compelled to announce the termination of his series." On the other hand, a Frenchman, also known to me personally, one day conceived the fortunate idea that a new primer might possibly be a saleable commodity. So he composed a little primer, beginning with the alphabet, advancing to a, b, *ab;* b, a, *ba;* and even going so far in history as to affirm that Adam was the first man and Abraham the father of the faithful. He had the wisdom to keep the copyright of this little publication, which employed (in the easiest of all imaginable literary labour)

An eminent English philosopher.

An ingenious Frenchman.

PART V. LETTER II.

A successful author.

the evenings of a single week. It has brought him in, ever since, a regular income of 120*l.* a year, which, so far from showing any signs of diminution, is positively improving. This success encouraged the same intelligent gentleman to compose more literature of the same order, and he is now the enviable owner of several other such copyrights, all of them very valuable; in fact as good properties as house-leases in London. Here is an author who, from the pecuniary point of view, was incomparably more successful than Milton, or Shelley, or Goethe. If every intellectual man could shield his higher life by writing primers for children which should be as good as house-leases, if the proverb *Qui peut le plus peut le moins* were a true proverb, which it is not, then of course all men of culture would be perfectly safe, since they all certainly know the contents of a primer. But you may be able to write the most learned philosophical treatise and still not be able to earn your daily bread.

Loss of time in money-getting.

Consider, too, the lamentable loss of time which people of high culture incur in making experiments on public taste, when money becomes one of their main objects. Whilst they are writing stories for children, or elementary educational books which people of far inferior attainment could probably do much better, their own self-improvement comes to a stand-still. If it could only be ascertained without delay what sort of work would bring in the money they require, then there would be some chance of apportioning time so as to make reserves for self-improvement; but when they have to write a score of volumes merely to ascertain the humour of the public, there is little chance of leisure. The life of the professional author who has no reputation is much less favourable to high culture than the life of a tradesman in

Professional authorship.

moderately easy circumstances who can reserve an hour or two every day for some beloved intellectual pursuit.

Sainte-Beuve's ideal life

Sainte-Beuve tells us that during certain years of his life he had endeavoured, and had been able, so to arrange his existence that it should have both sweetness and dignity, writing from time to time what was agreeable, reading what was both agreeable and serious, cultivating friendships, throwing much of his mind into the intimate relations of every day, giving more to his friends than to the public, reserving what was most tender and delicate for the inner life, enjoying with moderation; such for him was the dream of an intellectual existence in which things truly precious were valued according to their worth. And "*above all*," he said, above all his desire was not to write too much, "*surtout ne pas trop écrire.*" And then comes the regret for this wise, well-ordered life enjoyed by him only for a time. "La nécessité depuis m'a saisi et m'a contraint de renoncer à ce que je considérais comme le seul bonheur ou la consolation exquise du mélancolique et du sage."

Auguste Comte.

Auguste Comte lamented in like manner the evil intellectual consequences of anxieties about material needs. "There is nothing," he said, "more mortal to my mind than the necessity, pushed to a certain degree, to have to think each day about a provision for the next. Happily I think little and rarely about all that; but whenever this happens to me I pass through moments of discouragement and positive despair, which if the influence of them became habitual *would make me renounce all my labours, all my philosophical projects, to end my days like an ass.*"

There are a hundred rules for getting rich, but the instinct of accumulation is worth all such rules put

PART V. LETTER II.

Mere hoarders.

together. This instinct is rarely found in combination with high intellectual gifts, and the reason is evident. To advance from a hundred pounds to a thousand is not an intellectual advance, and there is no intellectual interest in the addition of a cipher at the bankers'. Simply to accumulate money that you are never to use is, from the intellectual point of view, as stupid an operation as can be imagined. We observe, too, that the great accumulators, the men who are gifted by nature with the true instinct, are not usually such persons as we feel any ambition to become. Their faculties are concentrated on one point, and that point, as it seems to us, of infinitely little importance. We cannot see that it signifies much to the intellectual well-being of humanity that John Smith should be worth his million when he dies, since we know quite well that John Smith's mind will be just as ill-furnished then as it is now. In places where much money is made we easily acquire a positive disgust for it, and the curate seems the most distinguished gentleman in the community, with his old black coat and his seventy pounds a year. We come to hate money-matters when we find that they exclude all thoughtful and disinterested conversation, and we fly to the society of people with fixed incomes, not large enough for much saving, to escape the perpetual talk about investments. Our happiest hours have been spent with poor scholars, and artists, and men of science, whose words remain in the memory and make us rich indeed. Then we dislike money because it rules and restrains us, and because it is unintelligent and seems hostile, so far as that which is unintelligent can be hostile. And yet the real truth is that money is the strong protector of the intellectual life. The student sits and studies, too often despising the

Rich and poor.

Money protects the intellectual life.

power that shelters him from the wintry night, that gives him roof and walls, and lamp, and books, and fire. For money is simply the accumulated labour of the past, guarding our peace as fleets and armies guard the industry of England, or like some mighty fortress-wall within which men follow the most peaceful avocations. The art is to use money so that it shall be the protector and not the scatterer of our time, the body-guard of the sovereign Intellect and Will.

LETTER III.

TO A STUDENT IN GREAT POVERTY.

Poverty really a great obstacle—Difference between a thousand rich men and a thousand poor men taken from persons of average natural gifts—The Houses of Parliament—The English recognize the natural connection between wealth and culture—Connection between ignorance and parsimony in expenditure—What may be honestly said for the encouragement of a very poor student.

Poverty a great obstacle.

As it seems to me that to make light of the difficulties which lie in the path of another is not to show true sympathy for him, even though it is done sometimes out of a sort of awkward kindness and for his encouragement, I will not begin by pretending that poverty is not a great obstacle to the perfection of the intellectual life. It *is* a great obstacle; it is one of the very greatest of all obstacles. Only observe how riches and poverty operate upon mankind in the mass. Here and there no doubt a very poor man attains intellectual distinction when he has exceptional strength of will, and health enough to bear a great strain of extra labour that he imposes upon himself, and natural gifts so brilliant that he can learn in

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an hour what common men learn in a day. But consider mankind in the mass. Look, for instance, at our two Houses of Parliament. They are composed of men taken from the average run of Englishmen with very little reference to ability, but almost all of them are rich men; not one of them is poor, as you are poor; not one of them has to contend against the stern realities of poverty. Then consider the very high general level of intellectual attainment which distinguishes those two assemblies, and ask yourself candidly whether a thousand men taken from the beggars in the streets, or even from the far superior class of our manufacturing operatives, would be likely to understand, as the two Houses of Parliament understand, the many complicated questions of legislation and of policy which are continually brought before them. We all know that the poor are too limited in knowledge and experience, from the want of the necessary opportunities, and too little accustomed to exercise their minds in the tranquil investigations of great questions, to be competent for the work of Parliament. It is scarcely necessary to insist upon this fact to an Englishman, because the English have always recognized the natural connection between wealth and culture, and have preferred to be governed by the rich from the belief that they are likely to be better informed, and better situated for intellectual activity of a disinterested kind, than those members of the community whose time and thoughts are almost entirely occupied in winning their daily bread by the incessant labour of their hands. And if you go out into the world, if you mix with men of very different classes, you will find that in a broad average way (I am not speaking just now of the exceptions) the richer classes are much more capable of entering into the sort

Two assemblies of rich men.

Want of experience in poverty.

Expenditure and parsimony.

of thinking which may be called intellectual than those whose money is less plentiful, and whose opportunities have therefore been less abundant. Indeed it may be asserted, roughly and generally, that the narrowness of men's ideas is in direct proportion to their parsimony in expenditure. I do not mean to affirm that all who spend largely attain large intellectual results, for of course we know that a man may spend vast sums on pursuits which do not educate him in anything worth knowing, but the advantage is that with habits of free expenditure the germs of thought are well tilled and watered, whereas parsimony denies them every external help. The most spending class in Europe is the English gentry, it is also the class most strikingly characterized by a high general average of information ;[1] the most parsimonious class in Europe is the French peasantry, it is also the class most strikingly characterized by ignorance and intellectual apathy. The English gentleman has cultivated himself by various reading and extensive travel, but the French peasant will not go anywhere except to the market-town, and could not pardon the extravagance of buying a book, or a candle to read it by in the evening. Between these extremes we have various grades of the middle classes in which culture usually increases very much in proportion to the expenditure. The rule is not without its exceptions; there are rich vulgar people who spend a great deal without improving themselves at all—who only, by unlimited self-indulgence, succeed in making themselves so uncomfortably sensitive to every bodily inconvenience

English gentlemen and French peasants.

[1] The reader will please to bear in mind that I am speaking here of broad effects on great numbers. I do not think that aristocracy, in its spirit, is quite favourable to the exceptionally highest intellectual life.

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that they have no leisure, even in the midst of an unoccupied life, to think of anything but their own bellies and their own skins—people whose power of attention is so feeble that the smallest external incident distracts it, and who remember nothing of their travels but a catalogue of trivial annoyances. But people of this kind do not generally belong to families on whom wealth has had time to produce its best effects. What I mean is, that a family which has been for generations in the habit of spending four thousand a year will usually be found to have a more cultivated tone than one that has only spent four hundred.

Effects of ancient wealth.

I have come to the recognition of this truth very reluctantly indeed, not because I dislike rich people, but merely because they are necessarily a very small minority, and I should like every human being to have the best benefits of culture if it were only possible. The plain living and high thinking that Wordsworth so much valued is a cheering ideal, for most men have to live plainly, and if they could only think with a certain elevation we might hope to solve the great problem of human life, the reconciliation of poverty and the soul. There certainly is a slow movement in that direction, and the shortening of the hours of labour may afford some margin of leisure; but we who work for culture every day, and all day long, and still feel that we know very little, and have hardly skill enough to make any effective use of the little that we know, can scarcely indulge in very enthusiastic anticipations of the future culture of the poor.

Possible culture of the poor.

Still, there are some things that may be rationally and truly said to a poor man who desires culture, and which are not without a sort of Spartan encouragement. You are restricted by your poverty, but it is not always a bad

Effects of opinion on the rich.

thing to be restricted, even from the intellectual point of view. The intellectual powers of well-to-do people are very commonly made ineffective by the enormous multiplicity of objects that are presented to their attention, and which claim from them a sort of polite notice like the greeting of a great lady to each of her thousand guests. It requires the very rarest strength of mind, in a rich man, to concentrate his attention on anything—there are so many things that he is expected to make a pretence of knowing; but nobody expects *you* to know anything, and this is an incalculable advantage. I think that all poor men who have risen to subsequent distinction have been greatly indebted to this independence of public opinion as to what they ought to know. In trying to satisfy that public opinion by getting up a pretence of various sorts of knowledge, which is only a sham, we sacrifice not only much precious time, but we blunt our natural interest in things. That interest you preserve in all its virgin force, and this force carries a man far. Then, again, although the opportunities of rich people are very superior to yours, they are not altogether so superior as they seem. There exists a great equalizing power, the limitation of human energy. A rich man may sit down to an enormous banquet, but he can only make a good use of the little that he is able to digest. So it is with the splendid intellectual banquet that is spread before the rich man's eyes. He can only possess what he has energy to master, and too frequently the manifest impossibility of mastering everything produces a feeling of discouragement that ends in his mastering nothing. A poor student, especially if he lives in an out-of-the-way place where there are no big libraries to bewilder him, may apply his energy with effect in the study of a few authors.

The poor more independent of opinion.

Limits of human energy.

PART V. LETTER III.

I used to believe a great deal more in opportunities and less in application than I do now. Time and health are needed, but with these there are always opportunities. Rich people have a fancy for spending money very uselessly on their culture because it seems to them more valuable when it has been costly; but the truth is, that by the blessing of good and cheap literature, intellectual light has become almost as accessible as daylight. I have a rich friend who travels more, and buys more costly things, than I do, but he does not really learn more or advance farther in the twelvemonth. If my days are fully occupied, what has he to set against them? only other well-occupied days, no more. If he is getting benefit at St. Petersburg he is missing the benefit I am getting round my house, and in it. The sum of the year's benefit seems to be surprisingly alike in both cases. So if you are reading a piece of thoroughly good literature, Baron Rothschild may possibly be as well occupied as you—he is certainly not better occupied. When I open a noble volume I say to myself, "Now the only Crœsus that I envy is he who is reading a better book than this."

The rich man does not always get most benefit.

PART VI.

CUSTOM AND TRADITION.

LETTER I.

TO A YOUNG GENTLEMAN WHO HAD FIRMLY RESOLVED NEVER TO WEAR ANYTHING BUT A GREY COAT.[1]

Secret enjoyment of rebellion against custom, and of the disabilities resulting from it—Penalties imposed by Society and by Nature out of proportion to the offence—Instances—What we consider penalties not really penalties, but only consequences—Society likes harmony, and is offended by dissonance—Utility of rebels against custom—That they ought to reserve their power of rebellion for great occasions—Uses of custom—Duty of the intellectual class—Best way to procure the abolition of a custom we disapprove—Bad customs—Eccentricity sometimes a duty.

WHEN I had the pleasure of staying at your father's house, you told me, rather to my surprise, that it was impossible for you to go to balls and dinner-parties because you did not possess such a thing as a dress-coat. The reason struck me as being scarcely a valid one, considering the rather high scale of expenditure adopted in the paternal mansion. It seemed clear that the eldest son of a family

A dress coat.

[1] The title of this letter seems so odd, that it may be necessary to inform the reader that it was addressed to a real person.

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which lived after the liberal fashion of Yorkshire country gentlemen could afford himself a dress-coat if he liked. Then I wondered whether you disliked dress-coats from a belief that they were unbecoming to your person; but a very little observation of your character quite satisfactorily convinced me that, whatever might be your weaknesses (for everybody has some weaknesses), anxiety about personal appearance was not one of them.

Secret enjoyment of disobedience to custom.

The truth is, that you secretly enjoy this little piece of disobedience to custom, and all the disabilities which result from it. This little rebellion is connected with a larger rebellion, and it is agreeable to you to demonstrate the unreasonableness of society by incurring a very severe penalty for a very trifling offence. You are always dressed decently, you offend against no moral rule, you have cultivated your mind by study and reflection, and it rather pleases you to think that a young gentleman so well qualified for society in everything of real importance should be excluded from it because he has not purchased a permission from his tailor.

Penalties and consequences.

The penalties imposed by society for the infraction of very trifling details of custom are often, as it seems, out of all proportion to the offence; but so are the penalties of nature. Only three days before the date of this letter, an intimate friend of mine was coming home from a day's shooting. His nephew, a fine young man in the full enjoyment of existence, was walking ten paces in advance. A covey of partridges suddenly cross the road: my friend in shouldering his gun touches the trigger just a second too soon, and kills his nephew. Now, think of the long years of mental misery that will be the punishment of that very trifling piece of carelessness! My poor friend has passed, in the space of a single instant, from a joyous

life to a life that is permanently and irremediably saddened. It is as if he had left the summer sunshine to enter a gloomy dungeon and begin a perpetual imprisonment. And for what? For having touched a trigger, without evil intention, a little too precipitately. It seems harder still for the victim, who is sent out of the world in the bloom of perfect manhood because his uncle was not quite so cool as he ought to have been. Again, not far from where I live, thirty-five men were killed last week in a coal-pit from an explosion of fire-damp. One of their number had struck a lucifer to light his pipe: for doing this in a place where he ought not to have done it, the man suffers the penalty of death, and thirty-four others with him. The fact is simply that Nature *will* be obeyed, and makes no attempt to proportion punishments to offences: indeed, what in our human way we call punishments are not punishments, but simple consequences. So it is with the great social penalties. Society *will be obeyed:* if you refuse obedience, you must take the consequences. Society has only one law, and that is custom. Even religion itself is socially powerful only just so far as it has custom on its side.

Nature will be obeyed.

Society will be obeyed.

Nature does not desire that thirty-five men should be destroyed because one could not resist the temptation of a pipe; but fire-damp is highly inflammable, and the explosion is a simple consequence. Society does not desire to exclude you because you will not wear evening dress; but the dress is customary, and your exclusion is merely a consequence of your nonconformity. The view of society goes no farther in this than the artistic conception (not very delicately artistic, perhaps) that it is prettier to see men in black coats regularly placed between ladies round a dinner-table than men in grey coats or

Society's artistic conceptions

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Society will have peace.

brown coats. The uniformity of costume appears to represent uniformity of sentiment and to ensure a sort of harmony amongst the *convives*. What society really cares for is harmony; what it dislikes is dissent and nonconformity. It wants peace in the dining-room, peace in the drawing-room, peace everywhere in its realm of tranquil pleasure. You come in your shooting-coat, which was in tune upon the moors, but is a dissonance amongst ladies in full dress. Do you not perceive that fustian and velveteen, which were natural amongst gamekeepers, are not so natural on gilded chairs covered with silk, with lace and diamonds at a distance of three feet? You don't perceive it? Very well: society does not argue the point with you, but only excludes you.

It has been said that in the life of every intellectual man there comes a time when he questions custom at all points. This seems to be a provision of nature for the reform and progress of custom itself, which without such questioning would remain absolutely stationary and irresistibly despotic. You rebels against the established custom have your place in the great work of progressive civilization. Without you, Western Europe would have been a second China. It is to the continual rebellion of such persons as yourself that we owe whatever progress has been accomplished since the times of our remotest forefathers. There have been rebels always, and the rebels have not been, generally speaking, the most stupid part of the nation.

Rebels against custom.

But what is the use of wasting this beneficial power of rebellion on matters too trivial to be worth attention? Does it hurt your conscience to appear in a dress-coat? Certainly not, and you would be as good-looking in it as you are in your velveteen shooting-jacket with the

Conformity in trifles.

pointers on the bronze buttons. Let us conform in these trivial matters, which nobody except a tailor ought to consider worth a moment's attention, in order to reserve our strength for the protection of intellectual liberty. Let society arrange your dress for you (it will save you infinite trouble), but never permit it to stifle the expression of your thought. You find it convenient, because you are timid, to exclude yourself from the world by refusing to wear its costume; but a bolder man would let the tailor do his worst, and then go into the world and courageously defend there the persons and causes that are misunderstood and slanderously misrepresented. The fables of Spenser are fables only in form, and a noble knight may at any time go forth, armed in the panoply of a tail-coat, a dress waistcoat, and a manly moral courage, to do battle across the dinner-table and in the drawing-room for those who have none to defend them.

True courage.

Utility of custom.

It is unphilosophical to set ourselves obstinately against custom in the mass, for it multiplies the power of men by settling useless discussion and clearing the ground for our best and most prolific activity. The business of the world could not be carried forward one day without a most complex code of customs; and law itself is little more than custom slightly improved upon by men reflecting together at their leisure, and reduced to codes and systems. We ought to think of custom as a most precious legacy of the past, saving us infinite perplexity, yet not as an infallible rule. The most intelligent community would be conservative in its habits, yet not obstinately conservative, but willing to hear and adopt the suggestions of advancing reason. The great duty of the intellectual class, and its especial function, is to confirm what is reasonable in the customs that have been

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The art of weakening customs.

handed down to us, and so maintain their authority, yet at the same time to show that custom is not final, but merely a form suited to the world's convenience. And whenever you are convinced that a custom is no longer serviceable, the way to procure the abolition of it is to lead men very gradually away from it, by offering a substitute at first very slightly different from what they have been long used to. If the English had been in the habit of tattooing, the best way to procure its abolition would have been to admit that it was quite necessary to cover the face with elaborate patterns, yet gently to suggest that these patterns would be still more elegant if delicately painted in water-colours. Then you might have gone on arguing—still admitting, of course, the absolute necessity for ornament of some kind—that good taste demanded only a moderate amount of it; and so you would have brought people gradually to a little flourish on the nose or forehead, when the most advanced reformers might have set the example of dispensing with ornament altogether. Many of our contemporaries have abandoned shaving in this gradual way, allowing the whiskers to encroach imperceptibly, till at last the razor lay in the dressing-case unused. The abominable black cylinders that covered our heads a few years ago were vainly resisted by radicals in costume, but the moderate reformers gradually reduced their elevation, and now they are things of the past.

Open resistance.

Though I think we ought to submit to custom in matters of indifference, and to reform it gradually, whilst affecting submission in matters not altogether indifferent, still there are other matters on which the only attitude worthy of a man is the most bold and open resistance to its dictates. Custom may have a right to authority over your wardrobe, but it cannot have any right to ruin your

Bad customs.

self-respect. Not only the virtues most advantageous to well-being, but also the most contemptible and degrading vices, have at various periods of the world's history been sustained by the full authority of custom. There are places where forty years ago drunkenness was conformity to custom, and sobriety an eccentricity. There are societies, even at the present day, where licentiousness is the rule of custom, and chastity the sign of weakness or want of spirit. There are communities (it cannot be necessary to name them) in which successful fraud, especially on a large scale, is respected as the proof of smartness, whilst a man who remains poor because he is honest is despised for slowness and incapacity. There are whole nations in which religious hypocrisy is strongly approved by custom, and honesty severely condemned. The Wahabee Arabs may be mentioned as an instance of this, but the Wahabee Arabs are not the only people, nor is Nejed the only place, where it is held to be more virtuous to lie on the side of custom than to be an honourable man in independence of it. In all communities where vice and hypocrisy are sustained by the authority of custom, eccentricity is a moral duty. In all communities where a low standard of thinking is received as infallible common sense, eccentricity becomes an intellectual duty. There are hundreds of places in the provinces where it is impossible for any man to lead the intellectual life without being condemned as an eccentric. It is the duty of intellectual men who are thus isolated to set the example of that which their neighbours call eccentricity, but which may be more accurately described as superiority.

Eccentricity sometimes a duty.

PART VI LETTER II.

of past experience, I may mention an argument against Republics which has been much used of late by the partisans of Monarchy in France. They have frequently told us that Republics had only succeeded in very small States, and this is true of ancient democracies; but it is not less true that railways, and telegraphs, and the newspaper press have made great countries like France and the United States just as capable of feeling and acting simultaneously as the smallest Republics of antiquity.

The lessons of history.

The parties which rely on what are called the lessons of history are continually exposed to great deceptions. In France, what may be called the historical party would not believe in the possibility of a united Germany, because fifty years ago, with the imperfect means of communication which then existed, Germany was not and could not be united. The same historical party refused to believe that the Italian kingdom could ever hold together. In England, the historical party predicted the dismemberment of the United States, and in some other countries it has been a favourite article of faith that England could not keep her possessions. But theories of this kind are always of very doubtful applicability to the present, and their applicability to the future is even more doubtful still. Steam and electricity have made great modern States practically like so many great cities, so that Manchester is like a suburb of London, and Havre the Piræus of Paris, whilst the most trifling occasions bring the Sovereign of Italy to any of the Italian capitals.

Deceptions of the historical party.

In the intellectual sphere the experience of the past is at least equally unreliable. If the power of the Catholic Church had been suddenly removed from the Europe of the fourteenth century, the consequence would have

Moral anarchy and ecclesiastical authority.

been a moral anarchy difficult to conceive; but in our own day the real regulator of morality is not the Church, but public opinion, in the formation of which the Church has a share, but only a share. It would therefore be unsafe to conclude that the weakening of ecclesiastical authority must of necessity, in the future, be followed by moral anarchy, since it is possible, and even probable, that the other great influences upon public opinion may gain strength as this declines. And in point of fact we have already lived long enough to witness a remarkable decline of ecclesiastical authority, which is proved by the avowed independence of scientific writers and thinkers, and by the open opposition of almost all the European Governments. The secular power resists the ecclesiastical in Germany and Spain. In France it establishes a form of government which the Church detests. In Ireland it disestablishes and disendows a hierarchy. In Switzerland it resists the whole power of the Papacy. In Italy it seizes the sacred territory and plants itself within the very walls of Rome. And yet the time which has witnessed this unprecedented self-assertion of the laity has witnessed a positive increase in the morality of public sentiment, especially in the love of justice and the willingness to hear truth, even when truth is not altogether agreeable to the listener, and in the respect paid by opponents to able and sincere men, merely for their ability and sincerity. This love of justice, this patient and tolerant hearing of new truth, in which our age immeasurably exceeds all the ages that have preceded it, are the direct results of the scientific spirit, and are not only in themselves eminently moral, but conducive to moral health generally. And this advancement may be observed in countries which were least supposed to be capable of it. Even the

Resistance of the secular power.

Increase of morality in public sentiment.

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French, of whose immorality we have heard so much, have a public opinion which is gradually gaining a salutary strength, an increasing dislike for barbarity and injustice, and a more earnest desire that no citizen, except by his own fault, should be excluded from the benefits of civilization. The throne which has lately fallen was undermined by the currents of this public opinion before it sank in military disaster. "Aussi me contenterai-je," says Littré, "d'appeler l'attention sur la guerre, dont l'opinion publique ne tolère plus les antiques barbaries; sur la magistrature, qui répudie avec horreur les tortures et la question; sur la tolérance, qui a banni les persécutions religieuses; sur l'équite, qui soumet tout le monde aux charges communes; sur le sentiment de solidarité qui du sort des classes pauvres fait le plus pressant et le plus noble problème du temps présent. Pour moi, je ne sais caractériser ce spectacle si hautement moral qu'en disant que l'humanité, améliorée, accepte de plus en plus le devoir et la tâche d'étendre le domaine de la justice et de la bonté."

Public opinion in France.

Yet this partial and comparative satisfaction that we find in the present, and our larger hopes for the future, are quite compatible with gratitude to all who in the past have rendered such improvement possible for us, and the higher improvement that we hope for possible to those who will come after us. I cannot think that the present age may be accused with justice of exceptional ignorance or scorn of its predecessors. We have been told that we scorn our forefathers because old buildings are removed to suit modern convenience, because the walls of old York have been pierced for the railway, and a tower of Conway Castle has been undermined that the Holyhead mail may pass. But the truth is, that whilst

The present age not exceptionally scornful of the past

Modern architects.

we care a little for our predecessors, they cared still less for theirs. The mediæval builders not only used as quarries any Roman remains that happened to come in their way, but they spoiled the work of their own fathers and grandfathers by intruding their new fashions on buildings originally designed in a different style of art. When an architect in the present day has to restore some venerable church, he endeavours to do so in harmony with the design of the first builder; but such humility as this was utterly foreign to the mediæval mind, which often destroyed the most lovely and necessary details to replace them with erections in the fashion of the day, but artistically unsuitable. The same disdain for the labours of other ages has prevailed until within the memory of living men, and our age is really the first that has made any attempt to conform itself, in these things, to the intentions of the dead. I may also observe, that although history is less relied upon as a guide to the future than it was formerly, it is more carefully and thoroughly investigated from an intellectual interest in itself.

Decline of the power of tradition.

To conclude. It seems to me that tradition has much less influence of an authoritative kind than it had formerly, and that the authority which it still possesses is everywhere steadily declining; that as a guide to the future of the world it is more likely to mislead than to enlighten us, and still that all intellectual and educated people must always take a great interest in tradition, and have a certain sentiment of respect for it. Consider what our feelings are towards the Church of Rome, the living embodiment of tradition. No well-informed person can forget the immense services that in former ages she has rendered to European civiliza-

The Church of Rome.

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tion, and yet at the same time such a person would scarcely wish to place modern thought under her direction, nor would he consult the Pope about the tendencies of the modern world. When in 1829 the city of Warsaw erected a monument to Copernicus, a scientific society there waited in the Church of the Holy Cross for a service that was to have added solemnity to their commemoration. They waited vainly. Not a single priest appeared. The clergy did not feel authorized to countenance a scientific discovery which, in a former age, had been condemned by the authority of the Church. This incident is delicately and accurately typical of the relation between the modern and the traditional spirit. The modern spirit is not hostile to tradition, and would not object to receive any consecration which tradition might be able to confer, but there are difficulties in bringing the two elements together.

An incident at Warsaw

We need not, however, go so far as Warsaw, or back to the year 1829, for examples of an unwillingness on the part of the modern mind to break entirely with the traditional spirit. Our own country is remarkable both for the steadiness of its advance towards a future widely different from the past, and for an affectionate respect for the ideas and institutions that it gradually abandons, as it is forced out of them by new conditions of existence I may mention, as one example out of very many, our feeling about the reconstruction of the navy. Here is a matter in which science has compelled us to break with tradition absolutely and irrevocably; we have done so, but we have done so with the greatest regret. The ships of the line that our hearts and imaginations love are the ships of Nelson and Collingwood and Cochrane. We think of the British fleets that bore down upon the enemy with the

Reconstruction of the British navy.

The ships of Nelson.

breeze in their white sails; we think of the fine qualities of seamanship that were fostered in our *Agamemnons*, and *Victories*, and *Téméraires*. Will the navies of the future ever so clothe their dreadful powers with beauty, as did the ordered columns of Nelson, when they came with a fair wind and all sails set, at eleven o'clock in the morning into Trafalgar Bay? We see the smoke of their broadsides rising up to their sails like mists to the snowy Alps, and high above, against heaven's blue, the unconquered flag of England! Nor do we perceive now for the first time that there was poetry in those fleets of old; our forefathers felt it then, and expressed it in a thousand songs.[1]

[1] I had desired to say something about the uses of tradition in the industrial arts and in the fine arts, but the subject is a very large one, and I have not time or space to treat it properly here. I may observe, however, briefly, that the genuine spirit of tradition has almost entirely disappeared from English industry and art, where it has been replaced by a spirit of scientific investigation and experiment. The true traditional spirit was still in full vigour in Japan a few years ago, and it kept the industry and art of that country up to a remarkably high standard. The traditional spirit is most favourable to professional skill, because, under its influence, the apprentice learns thoroughly, whereas under other influences he often learns very imperfectly. The inferiority of English painting to French (considered technically) has been due to the prevalence of a traditional spirit in the French school which was almost entirely absent from our own.

Tradition favourable to technical skill.

LETTER III.

TO A LADY WHO LAMENTED THAT HER SON HAD INTELLECTUAL DOUBTS CONCERNING THE DOGMAS OF THE CHURCH.

The situation of mother and son a very common one—Painful only when the parties are in earnest—The knowledge of the difference evidence of a deeper unity—Value of honesty—Evil of a splendid official religion not believed by men of culture—Diversity of belief an evidence of religious vitality—Criticism not to be ignored—Desire for the highest attainable truth—Letter from Lady Westmorland about her son, Julian Fane.

Separation in families on religious subjects when there is sincerity.

THE difference which you describe as having arisen between your son and you on the most grave and important subject which can occupy the thoughts of men, gives the outline of a situation painful to both the parties concerned, and which lays on each of them new and delicate obligations. You do not know how common this situation is, and how sadly it interferes with the happiness of the very best and most pure-minded souls alive. For such a situation produces pain only where both parties are earnest and sincere; and the more earnest both are, the more painful does the situation become. If you and your son thought of religion merely from the conventional point of view, as the world does only too easily, you would meet on a common ground, and might pass through life without ever becoming aware of any gulf of separation, even though the hollowness of your several professions were of widely different kinds. But as it happens, unfortunately for your peace (yet would you have it otherwise?), that you are both in earnest, both anxious to believe what is true and do what you believe to be right, you are likely to cause each other much suffering

of a kind altogether unknown to less honourable and devoted natures. There are certain forms of suffering which affect only the tenderest and truest hearts; they have so many privileges, that this pain has been imposed upon them as the shadow of their sunshine.

Let me suggest, as some ground of consolation and of hope, that your very knowledge of the difference which pains you is in itself the evidence of a deeper unity. If your son has told you the full truth about the changes in his belief, it is probably because you yourself have educated him in the habit of truthfulness, which is as much a law of religion as it is of honour. Do you wish this part of his education to be enfeebled or obliterated? Could the Church herself reasonably or consistently blame him for practising the one virtue which, in a peaceful and luxurious society, demands a certain exercise of courage? Our beliefs are independent of our will, but our honesty is not; and he who keeps his honesty keeps one of the most precious possessions of all true Christians and gentlemen. What state of society can be more repugnant to high religious feeling than a state of smooth external unanimity combined with the indifference of the heart—a state in which some splendid official religion performs its daily ceremonies as the costliest functionary of the Government, whilst the men of culture take a share in them out of conformity to the customs of society, without either the assent of the intellect or the emotion of the soul? All periods of great religious vitality have been marked by great and open diversity of belief; and to this day those countries where religion is most alive are the farthest removed from unanimity in the details of religious doctrine. If your son thinks these things of such importance to his conscience that

The habit of truthfulness.

Honesty a precious possession.

Diversity of belief a sign of religious vitality.

PART VI. LETTER III.

he feels compelled to inflict upon you the slightest pain on their account, you may rest assured that his religious fibre is still full of vitality. If it were deadened, he would argue very much as follows. He would say: "These old doctrines of the Church are not of sufficient consequence for me to disturb my mother about them. What is the use of alluding to them ever?" And then you would have no anxiety; and he himself would have the feeling of settled peace which comes over a battle-field when the dead are buried out of sight. It is the peculiarity—some would say the evil, but I cannot think it an evil—of an age of great intellectual activity to produce an amount of critical inquiry into religious doctrine which is entirely unknown to times of simple tradition.

Critical inquiry in times of great mental activity.

And in these days the critical tendency has received a novel stimulus from the successive suggestions of scientific discovery. No one who, like your son, fully shares in the intellectual life of the times in which he lives, can live as if this criticism did not exist. If he affected to ignore it, as an objection already answered, there would be disingenuousness in the affectation. Fifty years ago, even twenty or thirty years ago, a highly intellectual young man might have hardened into the fixed convictions of middle age without any external disturbance, except such as might have been easily avoided. The criticism existed then, in certain circles; but it was not in the air, as it is now. The life of mankind resembles that of a brook which has its times of tranquillity, but farther on its times of trouble and unrest. Our immediate forefathers had the peaceful time for their lot; those who went before them had passed over very rough ground at the Reformation. For us, in our turn, comes the recurrent restlessness, though not in the same place.

Rest and unrest.

PART VI
LETTER III.

What we are going to, who can tell? What we suffer just now, you and many others know too accurately. There are gulfs of separation in homes of the most perfect love. Our only hope of preserving what is best in that purest of earthly felicities lies in the practice of an immense charity, a wide tolerance, a sincere respect for opinions that are not ours, and a deep trust that the loyal pursuit of truth cannot but be in perfect accordance with the intentions of the Creator, who endowed the noblest races of mankind with the indefatigable curiosity of science. Not to inquire was possible for our forefathers, but it is not possible for us. With our intellectual growth has come an irrepressible anxiety to possess the highest truth attainable by us. This desire is not sinful, not presumptuous, but really one of the best and purest of our instincts, being nothing else than the sterling honesty of the intellect, seeking the harmony of concordant truth, and utterly disinterested.

Impossible for us not to inquire.

I may quote, as an illustration of the tendencies prevalent amongst the noblest and most cultivated young men, a letter from Lady Westmorland to Mr. Robert Lytton about her accomplished son, the now celebrated Julian Fane. "We had," she said, "several conversations, during his last illness, upon religious subjects, about which he had his own peculiar views. The disputes and animosities between High and Low Church, and all the feuds of religious sectarianism, caused him the deepest disgust. I think, indeed, that he carried this feeling too far. He had a horror of *cant*, which I also think was exaggerated; for it gave him a repulsion for all outward show of religious observances. He often told me that he never missed the practice of prayer,

Julian Fane.

His religious views.

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at morning and evening, and at other times. But his prayers were his own: his own thoughts in his own words. He said that he could not pray in the set words of another; nor unless he was *alone*. As to joining in family prayers, or praying at church, he found it impossible. He constantly read the New Testament. He deprecated the indiscriminate reading of the Bible. He firmly believed in the efficacy of sincere prayer; and was always pleased when I told him I had prayed for him."

Conversions to the Church of Rome.

To this it may be added, that many recent conversions to the Church of Rome, though apparently of an exactly opposite character, have in reality also been brought about by the scientific inquiries of the age. The religious sentiment, alarmed at the prospect of a possible taking away of that which it feeds upon, has sought in many instances to preserve it permanently under the guardianship of the strongest ecclesiastical authority. In an age of less intellectual disturbance this anxiety would scarcely have been felt; and the degree of authority claimed by one of the reformed Churches would have been accepted as sufficient. Here again the agitations of the modern intellect have caused division in families; and as you are lamenting the heterodoxy of your son, so other parents regret the Roman orthodoxy of theirs.

LETTER IV.

TO THE SON OF THE LADY TO WHOM THE PRECEDING LETTER WAS ADDRESSED.

Difficulty of detaching intellectual from religious questions—The sacerdotal system—Necessary to ascertain what religion is—Intellectual religion really nothing but philosophy—The popular instinct—The test of belief—Public worship—The intellect moral, but not religious—Intellectual activity sometimes in contradiction to dogma—Differences between the intellectual and religious lives.

YOUR request is not so simple as it appears. You ask me for a frank opinion as to the course your mind is taking in reference to very important subjects; but you desire only intellectual, and not religious guidance. The difficulty is to effect any clear demarcation between the two. Certainly I should never take upon myself to offer religious advice to anyone; it is difficult for those who have not qualified themselves for the priestly office to do that with force and effect. The manner in which a priest leads and manages a mind that has from the first been moulded in the beliefs and observances of his Church, cannot be imitated by a layman. A priest starts always from authority; his method, which has been in use from the earliest ages, consists first in claiming your unquestioning assent to certain doctrines, from which he immediately proceeds to deduce the inferences that may affect your conduct or regulate your thoughts. It is a method perfectly adapted to its own ends. It can deal with all humanity, and produce the most immediate practical results. So long as the assent to the doctrines

The sacerdotal method.

PART VI. LETTER IV.

is sincere, the sacerdotal system may contend successfully against some of the strongest forms of evil; but when the assent to the doctrines has ceased to be complete, when some of them are half-believed and others not believed at all, the system loses much of its primitive efficiency. It seems likely that your difficulty, the difficulty of so many intellectual men in these days, is to know where the intellectual questions end and the purely religious ones can be considered to begin. If you could once ascertain that, in a manner definitely satisfactory, you would take your religious questions to a clergyman and your intellectual ones to a man of science, and so get each solved independently.

What religion is.

Without presuming to offer a solution of so complex a difficulty as this, I may suggest to you that it is of some importance to your intellectual life to ascertain what religion is. A book was published many years ago by a very learned author, in which he endeavoured to show that what is vulgarly called scepticism may be intellectual religion. Now, although nothing can be more distasteful to persons of culture than the bigotry which refuses the name of religion to other people's opinions, merely because they are other people's opinions, I suspect that the popular instinct is right in denying the name of religion to the inferences of the intellect. The description which the author just alluded to gave of what he called intellectual religion was in fact simply a description of philosophy, and of that discipline which the best philosophy imposes upon the heart and the passions. On the other hand, Dr. Arnold, when he says that by religion he always understands Christianity, narrows the word as much as he would have narrowed the word "patriotism" had he defined it to mean a devotion to

Intellectual religion.

the interests of England. I think the popular instinct, though of course quite unable to construct a definition of religion, is in its vague way very well aware of the peculiar nature of religious thought and feeling. The popular instinct would certainly never confound religion with philosophy on the one hand, nor, on the other, unless excited to opposition, would it be likely to refuse the name of religion to another worship, such as Mahometanism, for instance.

According to the popular instinct, then, which on a subject of this kind appears the safest of all guides, a religion involves first a belief and next a public practice. The nature of the belief is in these days wholly peculiar to religion; in other times it was not so, because then people believed other things much in the same way. But in these days the test of religious belief is that it should make men accept as certain truth what they would disbelieve on any other authority. For example, a true Roman Catholic believes that the consecrated host is the body of Christ, and so long as he lives in the purely religious spirit he continues to believe this; but so soon as the power of his religious sentiment declines he ceases to believe it, and the wafer appears to him a wafer, and no more. And so amongst Protestants the truly religious believe many things which no person not being under the authority of religion could by any effort bring himself to believe. It is easy, for example, to believe that Joshua arrested the sun's apparent motion, so long as the religious authority of the Bible remains perfectly intact; but no sooner does the reader become critical than the miracle is disbelieved. In all ages, and in all countries, religions have narrated marvellous things, and the people have always affirmed that not to

Nature of religion.

Belief in the otherwise unbelievable.

Instance of a miracle.

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believe these narratives constituted the absence of religion, or what they called atheism. They have equally, in all ages and countries, held the public act of participation in religious worship to be an essential part of what they called religion. They do not admit the sufficiency of secret prayer.

Religion and philosophy.

Can these popular instincts help us to a definition? They may help us at least to mark the dividing line between religion and morality, between religion and philosophy. No one has ever desired, more earnestly and eagerly than I, to discover the foundations of the intellectual religion; no one has ever felt more chilling disappointment in the perception of the plain bare fact that the intellect gives morality, philosophy, precious things indeed, but not religion. It is like seeking art by science. Thousands of artists, whole schools from generation to generation, have sought fine art through anatomy and perspective; and although these sciences did not hinder the born artists from coming to art at last, they did not ensure their safe arrival in the art-paradise; in many instances they even led men away from art. So it is with the great modern search for the intellectual religion; the idea of it is scientific in its source, and the result of it, the last definite attainment, is simply intellectual morality, not religion in the sense which all humanity has attached to religion during all the ages that have preceded ours. We

Philosophy.

may say that philosophy is the religion of the intellectual; and if we go scrupulously to Latin derivations, it is so. But taking frankly the received meaning of the word as it is used by mankind everywhere, we must admit that, although high intellect would lead us inevitably to high and pure morality, and to most scrupulously beautiful

conduct in everything, towards men, towards women, towards even the lower and lowest animals, still it does not lead us to that belief in the otherwise unbelievable, or to that detailed *cultus* which is meant by religion in the universally accepted sense. It is disingenuous to take a word popularly respected and attribute to it another sense. Such a course is not strictly honest, and therefore not purely intellectual; for the foundation of the intellectual life is honesty.

Difficulty of the intellectual life.

The difficulty of the intellectual life is, that whilst it can never assume a position of hostility to religion, which it must always recognize as the greatest natural force for the amelioration of mankind, it is nevertheless compelled to enunciate truths which may happen to be in contradiction with dogmas received at this or that particular time. That you may not suspect me of a disposition to dwell continually on safe generalities and to avoid details out of timidity, let me mention two cases on which the intellectual and scientific find themselves at variance with the clergy. The clergy tell us that mankind descend from a single pair, and that in the earlier ages the human race attained a longevity counted not by decades but by centuries. Alexander Humboldt disbelieves the first of these propositions, Professor Owen disbelieves the second. Men of science generally are of the same opinion. Few men of science accept Adam and Eve, few accept Methuselah. Professor Owen argues that, since the oldest skeletons known have the same system of teething that we have, man can never have lived long enough to require nine sets of teeth. In regard to these, and a hundred other points on which science advances new views, the question which concerns us is how we are to maintain the integrity of the intellectual life. The

Tradition and science

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danger is the loss of inward ingenuousness, the attempt to persuade ourselves that we believe opposite statements. If once we admit disingenuousness into the mind, the intellectual life is no longer serene and pure.

Preservation of our honesty.

The plain course for the preservation of our honesty, which is the basis of truly intellectual thinking, is to receive the truth, whether agreeable or the contrary, with all its train of consequences, however repulsive or discouraging. In attempting to reconcile scientific truth with the oldest traditions of humanity, there is but one serious danger, the loss of intellectual integrity. Of that possession modern society has little left to lose.

Intellectual and religious lives.

But let us understand that the intellectual life and the religious life are as distinct as the scientific and the artistic lives. They may be led by the same person, but by the same person in different moods. They coincide on some points, accidentally. Certainly, the basis of high thinking is perfect honesty, and honesty is a recognized religious virtue. Where the two minds differ is on the importance of authority. The religious life is based upon authority, the intellectual life is based upon personal investigation. From the intellectual point of view I cannot advise you to restrain the spirit of investigation, which is the scientific spirit. It may lead you very far, yet always to truth, ultimately,—you, or those after you, whose path you may be destined to prepare. Science requires a certain inward heat and heroism in her votaries, notwithstanding the apparent coldness of her statements. Especially does she require that intellectual fearlessness which accepts a proved fact without reference to its personal or its social consequences.

LETTER V.

TO A FRIEND WHO SEEMED TO TAKE CREDIT TO HIMSELF, INTELLECTUALLY, FROM THE NATURE OF HIS RELIGIOUS BELIEF.

Anecdote of a Swiss gentleman—Religious belief protects traditions, but does not weaken the critical faculty itself—Illustration from the art of etching—Sydney Smith—Dr. Arnold—Earnest religious belief of Ampère—Comte and Sainte-Beuve—Faraday—Belief or unbelief proves nothing for or against intellectual capacity.

Anecdote of a Swiss gentleman.

I HAPPENED once to be travelling in Switzerland with an eminent citizen of that country, and I remember how in speaking of some place we passed through he associated together the ideas of Protestantism and intellectual superiority in some such phrase as this: "The people here are very superior; they are Protestants." There seemed to exist, in my companion's mind, an assumption that Protestants would be superior people intellectually, or that superior people would be Protestants; and this set me thinking whether, in the course of such experience as had fallen in my way, I had found that religious creed made much difference in the matter of intellectual acumen or culture.

Effects of religious belief.

The exact truth appears to be this. A religious belief protects this or that subject against intellectual action, but it does not affect the energy of the intellectual action upon subjects which are not so protected. Let me illustrate this by a reference to one of the fine arts, the art of etching. The etcher protects a copper-plate by means of a waxy covering called etching-ground, and wherever this ground is removed the acid bites the copper. The

PART VI. LETTER V.

waxy ground does not in the least affect the strength of the acid, it only intervenes between it and the metal plate. So it is in the mind of man with regard to his intellectual acumen and his religious creed. The creed may protect a tradition from the operation of the critical faculty, but it does not weaken the critical faculty itself. In the English Church, for example, the Bible is protected against criticism; but this does not weaken the critical faculty of English clergymen with reference to other literature, and many of them give evidence of a strong critical faculty in all matters not protected by their creed. Think of the vigorous common-sense of Sydney Smith, exposing so many abuses, at a time when it needed not only much courage but great originality to expose them! Remember the intellectual force of Arnold, a great natural force if ever there was one—so direct in action, so independent of contemporary opinion! Intellectual forces of this kind act freely not only in the Church of England, but in other Churches, even in the Church of Rome. Who amongst the scientific men of this century has been more profoundly scientific, more capable of original scientific discovery, than Ampère? Yet Ampère was a Roman Catholic, and not a Roman Catholic in the conventional sense merely, like the majority of educated Frenchmen, but a hearty and enthusiastic believer in the doctrines of the Church of Rome. The belief in transubstantiation did not prevent Ampère from becoming one of the best chemists of his time, just as the belief in the plenary inspiration of the New Testament does not prevent a good Protestant from becoming an acute critic of Greek literature generally. A man may have the finest scientific faculty, the most advanced scientific culture, and still believe the

Protection of tradition by belief.

Intellectual acumen of the clergy.

Ampère a sincere Catholic.

consecrated wafer to be the body of Jesus Christ. For since he still believes it to be the body of Christ under the apparent form of a wafer, it is evident that the wafer under chemical analysis would resolve itself into the same elements as before consecration; therefore why consult chemistry? What has chemistry to say to a mystery of this kind, the essence of which is the *complete* disguise of a human body under a form in *all* respects answering the material semblance of a wafer? Ampère must have foreseen the certain results of analysis as clearly as the best chemist educated in the principles of Protestantism, but this did not prevent him from adoring the consecrated host in all the sincerity of his heart.

Transubstantiation.

I say that it does not follow, because M. or N. happens to be a Protestant, that he is intellectually superior to Ampère, or because M. or N. happens to be a Unitarian, or a Deist, or a Positivist, that he is intellectually superior to Dr. Arnold or Sydney Smith. And on the other side of this question it is equally unfair to conclude that because a man does not share whatever may be our theological beliefs on the positive side, he must be less capable intellectually than we are. Two of the finest and most disciplined modern intellects, Comte and Sainte-Beuve, were neither Catholics, nor Protestants, nor Deists, but convinced atheists; yet Comte until the period of his decline, and Sainte-Beuve up to the very hour of his death, were quite in the highest rank of modern scientific and literary intellect.

Comte and Sainte-Beuve.

The inference from these facts which concerns every one of us is, that we are not to build up any edifice of intellectual self-satisfaction on the ground that in theological matters we believe or disbelieve this thing or

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Faraday.

that. If Ampère believed the doctrines of the Church of Rome, which to us seem so incredible, if Faraday remained throughout his brilliant intellectual career (certainly one of the most brilliant ever lived through by a human being) a sincere member of the obscure sect of the Sandemanians, we are not warranted in the conclusion that we are intellectually their betters because our theology is more novel, or more fashionable, or more in harmony with reason. Nor, on the other hand, does our orthodoxy prove anything in favour of our mental force and culture. Who, amongst the most orthodox writers, has a more forcible and cultivated intellect than Sainte-Beuve?—who can better give us the tone of perfect culture, with its love of justice, its thoroughness in preparation, its superiority to all crudeness and violence? Anglican or Romanist, dissenter or heretic, may be our master in the intellectual sphere, from which no sincere and capable labourer is excluded, either by his belief or by his unbelief.

Sainte-Beuve.

LETTER VI.

LETTER VI.

TO A ROMAN CATHOLIC FRIEND WHO ACCUSED THE INTELLECTUAL CLASS OF A WANT OF REVERENCE FOR AUTHORITY.

Necessity for treating affirmations as if they were doubtful—The Papal Infallibility—The Infallibility of the Sacred Scriptures—Opposition of method between Intellect and Faith—The perfection of the intellectual life requires intellectual methods—Inevitable action of the intellectual forces.

IT is very much the custom, in modern writing about liberty of thought, to pass lightly over the central difficulty, which sooner or later will have to be considered

The difficulty is this, that the freedom of the intellectual life can never be secured except by treating as if they were doubtful several affirmations which large masses of mankind hold to be certainties as indisputable as the facts of science. One of the most recently conspicuous of these affirmations is the infallibility of the Pope of Rome. Nothing can be more certain in the opinion of immense numbers of Roman Catholics than the infallible authority of the Supreme Pontiff on all matters affecting doctrine. But then the matters affecting doctrine include many subjects which come within the circle of the sciences. History is one of those subjects which modern intellectual criticism takes leave to study after its own methods, and yet certain prevalent views of history are offensive to the Pope and explicitly condemned by him. The consequence is, that in order to study history with mental liberty, we have to act practically as if there existed a doubt of the Papal infallibility. The same difficulty occurs with reference to the great Protestant doctrine which attributes a similar infallibility to the various authors who composed what are now known to us as the Holy Scriptures. Our men of science act, and the laws of scientific investigation compel them to act, as if it were not quite certain that the views of scientific subjects held by those early writers were so final as to render modern investigation superfluous. It is useless to disguise the fact that there is a real opposition of method between intellect and faith, and that the independence of the intellectual life can never be fully secured unless all affirmations based upon authority are treated as if they were doubtful. This implies no change of manner in the intellectual classes towards those classes whose

Infallibility of the Pope.

Infallibility of the Scriptures.

Opposition of method between intellect and faith

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mental habits are founded upon obedience. I mean that the man of science does not treat the affirmations of any priesthood with less respect than the affirmations of his own scientific brethren; he applies with perfect impartiality the same criticism to all affirmations, from whatever source they emanate. The intellect does not recognize authority in any one, and intellectual men do not treat the Pope, or the author of Genesis, with less consideration than those famous persons who in their day have been the brightest luminaries of science. The difficulty, however, remains, that whilst the intellectual class has no wish to offend either those who believe in the infallibility of the Pope, or those who believe in the infallibility of the author of Genesis, it is compelled to conduct its own investigations as if those infallibilities were matters of doubt and not of certainty.

The intellect does not recognize authority.

Why this is so, may be shown by a reference to the operation of Nature in other ways. The rewards of physical strength and health are not given to the most moral, to the most humane, to the most gentle, but to those who have acted, and whose forefathers have acted, in the most perfect accordance with the laws of their physical constitution. So the perfection of the intellectual life is not given to the most humble, the most believing, the most obedient, but to those who use their minds according to the most purely intellectual methods. One of the most important truths that human beings can know is the perfectly independent working of the natural laws: one of the best practical conclusions to be drawn from the observation of Nature is that in the conduct of our own understandings we should use a like independence.

The perfection of the intellectual life.

It would be wrong, in writing to you on subjects so

Science and authority.

important as these, to shrink from handling the real difficulties. Everyone now is aware that science must and will pursue her own methods and work according to her own laws, without concerning herself with the most authoritative affirmations from without. But if science said one thing and authoritative tradition said another, no perfectly ingenuous person could rest contented until he had either reconciled the two or decidedly rejected one of them. It is impossible for a mind which is honest towards itself to admit that a proposition is true and false at the same time, true in science and false in theology. Therefore, although the intellectual methods are entirely independent of tradition, it may easily happen that the indirect results of our following those methods may be the overthrow of some dogma which has for many generations been considered indispensable to man's spiritual welfare. With regard to this contingency it need only be observed that the intellectual forces of humanity must act, like floods and winds, according to their own laws; and that if they cast down any edifice too weak to resist them, it must be because the original constructors had not built it substantially, or because those placed in charge of it had neglected to keep it in repair. This is their business, not ours. Our work is simply to ascertain truth by our own independent methods, alike without hostility to any persons claiming authority, and without deference to them.

Possible consequences of intellectual activity.

PART VII.

WOMEN AND MARRIAGE.

LETTER I.

TO A YOUNG GENTLEMAN OF INTELLECTUAL TASTES, WHO, WITHOUT HAVING AS YET ANY PARTICULAR LADY IN VIEW, HAD EXPRESSED, IN A GENERAL WAY, HIS DETERMINATION TO GET MARRIED.

PART VII. LETTER I.

How ignorant we all are about marriage—People wrong in their estimates of the marriages of others—Effects of marriage on the intellectual life—Two courses open—A wife who would not interfere with elevated pursuits—A wife capable of understanding them—Madame Ingres—Difference in the education of the sexes—Difficulty of educating a wife.

How little we know about marriage

THE subject of marriage is one concerning which neither I nor anybody else can have more than an infinitesimally small atom of knowledge. Each of us knows how his or her own marriage has turned out; but that, in comparison with a knowledge of marriage generally, is like a single plant in comparison with the flora of the globe. The utmost experience on this subject to be found in this country extends to about three trials or experiments. A man may become twice a widower, and then marry a third time, but it may be easily shown that the variety of his experience is more than counterbalanced by its incompleteness in each instance. For the experiment to be

conclusive even as to the wisdom of one decision, it must extend over half a lifetime. A true marriage is not a mere temporary arrangement, and although a young couple are said to be married as soon as the lady has changed her name, the truth is that the real marriage is a long slow intergrowth, like that of two trees planted quite close together in the forest.

Our mistakes about the marriages of others.

The subject of marriage generally is one of which men know less than they know of any other subject of universal interest. People are almost always wrong in their estimates of the marriages of others, and the best proof how little we know the real tastes and needs of those with whom we have been most intimate, is our unfailing surprise at the marriages they make. Very old and experienced people fancy they know a great deal about younger couples, but their guesses, there is good reason to believe, never *exactly* hit the mark.

Ever since this idea, that marriage is a subject we are all very ignorant about, had taken root in my own mind, many little incidents were perpetually occurring to confirm it; they proved to me, on the one hand, how often I had been mistaken about other people, and, on the other hand, how mistaken about people were concerning the only marriage I profess to know anything about, namely, my own.

Privacy of marriage.

Our ignorance is all the darker that few men tell us the little that they know, that little being too closely bound up with that innermost privacy of life which every man of right feeling respects in his own case, as in the case of another. The only instances which are laid bare to the public view are the unhappy marriages, which are really not marriages at all. An unhappy alliance bears exactly the same relation to a true marriage that disease does to

Unhappy marriages.

PART VII. LETTER I.

health, and the quarrels and misery of it are the crises by which Nature tries to bring about either the recovery of happiness, or the endurable peace of a settled separation.

All that we really know about marriage is that it is based upon the most powerful of all our instincts, and that it shows its own justification in its fruits, especially in the prolonged and watchful care of children. But marriage is very complex in its effects, and there is one set of effects, resulting from it, to which remarkably little attention has been paid hitherto,—I mean its effects upon the intellectual life. Surely they deserve consideration by all who value culture.

Only two courses open for the intellectual.

I believe that for an intellectual man, only two courses are open; either he ought to marry some simple dutiful woman who will bear him children, and see to the household matters, and love him in a trustful spirit without jealousy of his occupations; or else, on the other hand, he ought to marry some highly intelligent lady, able to carry her education far beyond school experiences, and willing to become his companion in the arduous paths of intellectual labour. The danger in the first of the two cases is that pointed out by Wordsworth in some verses addressed to lake-tourists who might feel inclined to buy a peasant's cottage in Westmoreland. The tourist would spoil the little romantic spot if he bought it; the charm of it is subtly dependent upon the poetry of a simple life, and would be brushed away by the influence of the things that are necessary to people in the middle class. I remember dining in a country inn with an English officer whose ideas were singularly unconventional. We were waited upon by our host's daughter, a beautiful girl, whose manners were remarkable for their natural elegance and distinction. It seemed to us both that no lady of rank

Danger of unequal marriages.

could be more distinguished than she was; and my companion said that he thought a gentleman might do worse than ask that girl to marry him, and settle down quietly in that quiet mountain village, far from the cares and vanities of the world. That is a sort of dream which has occurred no doubt to many an honourable man. Some men have gone so far as to try to make the dream a reality, and have married the beautiful peasant. But the difficulty is that she does not remain what she was; she becomes a sort of make-belief lady, and then her ignorance, which in her natural condition was a charming *naïveté*, becomes an irritating defect. If, however, it were possible for an intellectual man to marry some simple-hearted peasant girl, and keep her carefully in her original condition, I seriously believe that the venture would be less perilous to his culture than an alliance with some woman of our Philistine classes, equally incapable of comprehending his pursuits, but much more likely to interfere with them. I once had a conversation on this subject with a distinguished artist, who is now a widower, and who is certainly not likely to be prejudiced against marriage by his own experience, which had been an unusually happy one. His view was that a man devoted to art might marry either a plain-minded woman, who would occupy herself exclusively with household matters and shield his peace by taking these cares upon herself, or else a woman quite capable of entering into his artistic life; but he was convinced that a marriage which exposed him to unintelligent criticism and interference would be dangerous in the highest degree. And of the two kinds of marriage which he considered possible he preferred the former, that with the entirely ignorant and simple person from whom no

Peasant-girls

Opinion of a distinguished artist.

PART VII. LETTER I.

Madame Ingres.

interference was to be apprehended. He considered the first Madame Ingres the true model of an artist's wife, because she did all in her power to guard her husband's peace against the daily cares of life and never herself disturbed it, acting the part of a breakwater which protects a space of calm, and never destroys the peace that it has made. This may be true for artists whose occupation is rather æsthetic than intellectual, and does not get much help or benefit from talk; but the ideal marriage for a man of great literary culture would be one permitting some equality of companionship, or, if not equality, at least interest. That this ideal is not a mere dream, but may consolidate into a happy reality, several examples prove; yet these examples are not so numerous as to relieve me from anxiety about your chances of finding such companionship. The different education of the two sexes separates them widely at the beginning, and to meet on any common ground of culture a second education has to be gone through. It rarely happens that there is resolution enough for this.

Ideal marriage of a man of culture.

The want of thoroughness and reality in the education of both sexes, but especially in that of women, may be attributed to a sort of policy which is not very favourable to companionship in married life. It appears to be thought wise to teach boys things which women do not learn, in order to give women a degree of respect for men's attainments, which they would not be so likely to feel if they were prepared to estimate them critically; whilst girls are taught arts and languages which until recently were all but excluded from our public schools, and won no rank at our universities. Men and women had consequently scarcely any common ground to meet upon, and the absence of serious mental discipline in

Separation of the sexes in early mental training.

the training of women made them indisposed to submit to the irksomeness of that earnest intellectual labour which might have remedied the deficiency. The total lack of accuracy in their mental habits was then, and is still for the immense majority of women, the least easily surmountable impediment to culture. The history of many marriages which have failed to realize intellectual companionship is comprised in a sentence which was actually uttered by one of the most accomplished of my friends: "She knew nothing when I married her. I tried to teach her something; it made her angry, and I gave it up."

History of many marriages that have failed.

LETTER II.

TO A YOUNG GENTLEMAN WHO CONTEMPLATED MARRIAGE.

The foundations of the intellectual marriage—Marriage not a snare or pitfall for the intellectual—Men of culture, who marry badly, often have themselves to blame—For every grade of the masculine intellect there exists a corresponding grade of the feminine intellect—Difficulty of finding the true mate—French University Professors—An extreme case of intellectual separation—Regrets of a widow—Women help us less by adding to our knowledge than by understanding us.

In several letters which have preceded this I have indicated some of the differences between the female sex and ours, and it is time to examine the true foundations of the intellectual marriage. Let me affirm, to begin with, my profound faith in the natural arrangement. There is in nature so much evident care for the development of the intellectual life, so much protection of it in the social order, there are such admirable contrivances for continuing it from century to century, that we may

Faith in the natural arrangement.

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fairly count upon some provision for its necessities in marriage. Intellectual men are not less alive to the charms of women than other men are; indeed the greatest of them have always delighted in the society of women. If marriage were really dangerous to the intellectual life, it would be a moral snare or pitfall, from which the best and noblest would be least likely to escape. It is hard to believe that the strong passions which so often accompany high intellectual gifts were intended either to drive their possessors into immorality or else to the misery of ill-assorted unions.

The intellectual marriage.

No, there *is* such a thing as the intellectual marriage, in which the intellect itself is married. If such marriages are not frequent, it is that they are not often made the deliberate purpose of a wise alliance. Men choose their wives because they are pretty, or because they are rich, or because they are well-connected, but rarely for the permanent interest of their society. Yet who that had ever been condemned to the dreadful embarrassments of a *tête-à-tête* with an uncompanionable person, could reflect without apprehension on a lifetime of such *tête-à-têtes*?

Men have themselves to blame for ill-assorted unions.

When intellectual men suffer from this misery they have themselves to blame. What is the use of having any mental superiority, if, in a matter so enormously important as the choice of a companion for life, it fails to give us a warning when the choice is absurdly unsuitable? When men complain, as they do not unfrequently, that their wives have no ideas, the question inevitably suggests itself, why the superiority of the masculine intellect did not, in these cases, permit it to discover the defect in time? If we are so clever as to be bored by ordinary women, why cannot our cleverness find out the feminine cleverness which would respond to it?

What I am going to say now is in its very nature incapable of proof, and yet the longer I live the more the truth of it is "borne in upon me." I feel convinced that for every grade of the masculine intellect there exists a corresponding grade of the feminine intellect, so that a precisely suitable intellectual marriage is always possible for everyone. But since the higher intellects are rare, and rare in proportion to their elevation, it follows that the difficulty of finding the true mate increases with the mental strength and culture of the man. If the "mental princes," as Blake called himself, are to marry the mental princesses, they will not always discover them quite so easily as kings' sons find kings' daughters.

Difficulty of finding the true mate.

This difficulty of finding the true mate is the real reason why so many clever men marry silly or stupid women. The women about them seem to be all very much alike, mentally; it seems hopeless to expect any real companionship, and the clever men are decided by the colour of a girl's eyes, or a thousand pounds more in her dowry, or her relationship to a peer of the realm.

French university professors

It was remarked to me by a French university professor, that although men in his position had on the whole much more culture than the middle class, they had an extraordinary talent for winning the most vulgar and ignorant wives. The explanation is, that their marriages are not intellectual marriages at all. The class of French professors is not advantageously situated; it has not great facilities for choice. Their incomes are so small that, unless helped by private means, the first thing they can prudently look to in a wife is her utility as a domestic servant, which, in fact, it is her destiny to become. The intellectual disparity is from the beginning likely to be

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very great, because the professor is confined to the country-town where his *Lycée* happens to be situated, and in that town he does not always see the most cultivated society. He may be an intellectual prince, but where is he to find his princess? The marriage begins without the idea of intellectual companionship, and it continues as it began. The girl was uneducated: it seems hopeless to try to educate the woman; and then there is the supreme difficulty, only to be overcome by two wills at once most resolute and most persistent, namely, how to find the time. Years pass; the husband is occupied all day; the wife needs to cheer herself with a little society, and goes to sit with neighbours who are not likely to add anything valuable to her knowledge or to give any elevation to her thoughts. Then comes the final fixing and crystallization of her intellect, after which, however much pains and labour might be taken by the pair, she is past the possibility of change.

Course of married life with an uneducated woman.

These women are often so good and devoted that their husbands enjoy great happiness; but it is a kind of happiness curiously independent of the lady's presence. The professor may love his wife, and fully appreciate her qualities as a housekeeper, but he passes a more interesting evening with some male friend whose reading is equal to his own. Sometimes the lady perceives this, and it is an element of sadness in her life.

"I never see my husband," she tells you, not in anger. "His work occupies him all day, and in the evening he sees his friends." The pair walk out together twice a week. I sometimes wonder what they say to each other during those conjugal promenades. They talk about their children, probably, and the little recurring difficulties about money. He cannot talk about his studies,

or the intellectual speculations which his studies continually suggest.

An extreme instance of intellectual separation in marriage

The most extreme case of intellectual separation between husband and wife that ever came under my observation was, however, not that of a French professor, but a highly-cultivated Scotch lawyer. He was one of the most intellectual men I ever knew—a little cynical, but full of original power, and uncommonly well-informed. His theory was, that women ought not to be admitted into the region of masculine thought—that it was not good for them; and he acted so consistently up to this theory, that although he would open his mind with the utmost frankness to a male acquaintance over the evening whisky-toddy, there was not whisky enough in all Scotland to make him frank in the presence of his wife. She really knew nothing whatever about his intellectual existence; and yet there was nothing in his ways of thinking which an honourable man need conceal from an intelligent woman. His theory worked well enough in practice, and his reserve was so perfect that it may be doubted whether even feminine subtlety ever suspected it. The explanation of his system may perhaps have been this. He was an exceedingly busy man; he felt that he had not time to teach his wife to know him as he was, and so preferred to leave her with her own conception of him, rather than disturb that conception when he believed it impossible to replace it by a completely true one. We all act in that way with those whom we consider *quite* excluded from our private range of thought.

All this may be very prudent and wise: there may be degrees of conjugal felicity, satisfactory in their way, without intellectual intercourse, and yet I cannot think that any man of high culture could regard his marriage

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Regrets of a widow.

as altogether a successful one so long as his wife remained shut out from his mental life. Nor is the exclusion always quite agreeable for the lady herself. A widow said to me that her husband had never thought it necessary to try to raise her to his own level, yet she believed that with his kindly help she might have attained it.

You, with your masculine habits, may observe, as to this, that if the lady had seriously cared to attain a higher level she might have achieved it by her own private independent effort. But this is exactly what the feminine nature never does. A clever woman is the best of pupils, when she loves her teacher, but the worst of solitary learners.

Women good pupils and bad solitary learners.

It is not by adding to our knowledge, but by understanding us, that women are our helpers. They understand us far better than men do, when once they have the degree of preliminary information which enables them to enter into our pursuits. Men are occupied with their personal works and thoughts, and have wonderfully little sympathy left to enable them to comprehend us; but a woman, by her divine sympathy—divine indeed, since it was given by God for this—can enter into our inmost thought, and make allowances for all our difficulties. Talk about your work and its anxieties to a club of masculine friends, they will give very little heed to you; they are all thinking about themselves, and they will dislike your egotism because they have so much egotism of their own, which yours invades and inconveniences. But talk in the same way to any woman who has education enough to enable her to follow you, and she will listen so kindly, and so very intelligently, that you will be betrayed into interminable confidences.

How women help us.

Now, although an intellectual man may not care to make himself understood by all the people in the street, it is not a good thing for him to feel that he is understood by nobody. The intellectual life is sometimes a fearfully solitary one. Unless he lives in a great capital the man devoted to that life is more than all other men liable to suffer from isolation, to feel utterly alone beneath the deafness of space and the silence of the stars. Give him one friend who can understand him, who will not leave him, who will always be accessible by day and night—one friend, one kindly listener, just one, and the whole universe is changed. It is deaf and indifferent no longer, and whilst *she* listens, it seems as if all men and angels listened also, so perfectly his thought is mirrored in the light of her answering eyes.

Isolation prevented by marriage.

LETTER III.

TO A YOUNG GENTLEMAN WHO CONTEMPLATED MARRIAGE.

The intellectual ideal of marriage—The danger of dulness—To be counteracted only by the renewal of both minds—Example of Lady Baker—Separation of the sexes by an old prejudice about education—This prejudice on the decline—Influence of the late Prince Consort.

Intellectual ideal of marriage.

How far may you hope to realize the intellectual ideal of marriage? Have I ever observed in actual life any approximate realization of that ideal?

These are the two questions which conclude and epitomize the last of your recent letters. Let me endeavour to answer them as satisfactorily as the obscurity of the subject will permit.

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The intellectual ideal seems to be that of a conversation on all the subjects you most care about, which should never lose its interest. Is it possible that two people should live together and talk to each other every day for twenty years without knowing each other's views too well for them to seem worth expressing or worth listening to? There are friends whom we know *too* well, so that our talk with them has less of refreshment and entertainment than a conversation with the first intelligent stranger on the quarter-deck of the steamboat. It is evident that from the intellectual point of view this is the great danger of marriage. It may become dull, not because the mental force of either of the parties has declined, but because each has come to know so accurately beforehand what the other will say on any given topic, that inquiry is felt to be useless. This too perfect intimacy, which has ended many a friendship outside of marriage, may also terminate the intellectual life in matrimony itself.

Friends whom we know too well.

Dulness of perfect intimacy.

Let us not pass too lightly over this danger, for it is not to be denied. Unless carefully provided against, it will gradually extinguish the light that plays between the wedded intelligences as the electric light burns between two carbon points.

I venture to suggest, however, that this evil may be counteracted by persons of some energy and originality. This is one of those very numerous cases in which an evil is sure to arrive if nothing is done to prevent it, yet in which the evil need not arrive when those whom it menaces are forewarned. To take an illustration intelligible in these days of steam-engines. We know that if the water is allowed to get very low in the boiler a destructive explosion will be the consequence; yet, since

The evil may be counteracted.

every stoker is aware of this, such explosions are not of frequent occurrence. That evil is continually approaching and yet continually averted by the exercise of human foresight.

Means of preventing dulness in marriage.

Let us suppose that a married couple are clearly aware that in the course of years their society is sure to become mutually uninteresting unless something is done to preserve the earlier zest of it. What is that something?

That which an author does for the unknown multitude of his readers.

Every author who succeeds takes the trouble to renew his mind either by fresh knowledge or new thoughts. Is it not at least equally worth while to do as much to preserve the interest of marriage? Without undervaluing the friendly adhesion of many readers, without affecting any contempt for fame, which is dearer to the human heart than wealth itself whenever it appears to be not wholly unattainable, may not I safely affirm that the interest of married life, from its very *nearness*, has a still stronger influence upon the mind of any thinking person, of either sex, than the approbation of unnumbered readers in distinct countries or continents? You never *see* the effect of your thinking on your readers; they live and die far away from you, a few write letters of praise or criticism, the thousands give no sign. But the wife is with you always, she is almost as near to you as your own body; the world, to you, is a figure-picture in which there is one figure, the rest is merely background. And if an author takes pains to renew his mind for the people in the background, is it not at least equally worth your while to bring fresh thought for the renewal of your life with her?

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This, then, is my theory of the intellectual marriage, that the two wedded intellects ought to renew themselves continually for each other. And I argue that if this were done in earnest, the otherwise inevitable dulness would be perpetually kept at bay.

To the other question, whether in actual life I have ever seen this realized, I answer yes, in several instances.

Instances of women renewing their minds for their husbands.

Not in very many instances, yet in more than one. Women, when they have conceived the idea that this renewal is necessary, have resolution enough for the realization of it. There is hardly any task too hard for them, if they believe it essential to the conjugal life. I could give you the name and address of one who mastered Greek in order not to be excluded from her husband's favourite pursuit; others have mastered other languages for the same object, and even some branch of science, for which the feminine mind has less natural affinity than it has for imaginative literature. Their remarkable incapacity for independent mental labour is accompanied by an equally remarkable capacity for labour under an accepted masculine guidance. In this connection I may without impropriety mention one Englishwoman, for she is already celebrated, the wife of Sir Samuel Baker, the discoverer of the Albert Nyanza. She stood with him on the shore of that unknown sea, when first it was beheld by English eyes; she had passed with him through all the hard preliminary toils and trials. She had learned Arabic with him in a year of necessary but wearisome delay; her mind had travelled with his mind as her feet had followed his footsteps. Scarcely less beautiful, if less heroic, is the picture of the geologist's wife, Mrs. Buckland, who taught herself to reconstruct

broken fossils, and did it with a surprising delicacy, and patience, and skill, full of science, yet more than science, the perfection of feminine art.

Renewal of minds after marriage.

The privacy of married life often prevents us from knowing the extent to which intelligent women have renewed their minds by fresh and varied culture for the purpose of retaining their ascendency over their husbands, or to keep up the interest of their lives. It is done much more frequently by women than by men. They have so much less egotism, so much more adaptability, that they fit themselves to us oftener than we adapt ourselves to them. But in a quite perfect marriage these efforts would be mutual. The husband would endeavour to make life interesting to his companion by taking a share in some pursuit which was really her own. It is easier for us than it was for our ancestors to do this—at least for our immediate ancestors. There existed, fifty years ago, a most irrational prejudice, very strongly rooted in the social conventions of the time, about masculine and feminine accomplishments. The educations of the two sexes were so trenchantly separated that neither had access to the knowledge of the other. The men had learned Latin and Greek, of which the women were ignorant; the women had learned French or Italian, which the men could neither read nor speak. The ladies studied fine art, not seriously, but it occupied a good deal of their time and thoughts; the gentlemen had a manly contempt for it, which kept them, as contempt always does, in a state of absolute ignorance. The intellectual separation of the sexes was made as complete as possible by the conventionally received idea that a man could not learn what girls learned without effeminacy, and that if women aspired to men's knowledge they would forfeit

Separation of the sexes in education.

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the delicacy of their sex. This illogical prejudice was based on a bad syllogism of this kind :—

Girls speak French, and learn music and drawing.
Benjamin speaks French, and learns music and drawing.
Benjamin is a girl.

And the prejudice, powerful as it was, had not even the claim of any considerable antiquity. Think how strange and unreasonable it would have seemed to Lady Jane Grey and Sir Philip Sidney! In their time, ladies and gentlemen studied the same things, the world of culture was the same for both, and they could meet in it as in a garden.

Culture independent of sex.

Happily we are coming back to the old rational notion of culture as independent of the question of sex. Latin and Greek are not unfeminine; they were spoken by women in Athens and Rome; the modern languages are fit for a man to learn, since men use them continually on the battle-fields and in the parliaments and exchanges of the world. Art is a manly business, if ever any human occupation could be called manly, for the utmost efforts of the strongest men are needed for success in it.

The increasing interest in the fine arts, the more important position given to modern languages in the universities, the irresistible attractions and growing authority of science, all tend to bring men and women together on subjects understood by both, and therefore operate directly in favour of intellectual interests in marriage. You will not suspect me of a snobbish desire to pay compliments to royalty if I trace some of these changes in public opinion to the example and influence of the

The Prince Consort.

Prince Consort, operating with some effect during his life, yet with far greater force since he was taken away from

His notion of culture.

us. The truth is, that the most modern English ideal of gentlemanly culture is that which Prince Albert, to a great extent, realized in his own person. Perhaps his various accomplishments may be a little embellished or exaggerated in the popular belief, but it is unquestionable that his notion of culture was very large and liberal, and quite beyond the narrow pedantry of the preceding age. There was nothing in it to exclude a woman, and we know that she who loved him entered largely into the works and recreations of his life.

LETTER IV.

TO A YOUNG GENTLEMAN WHO CONTEMPLATED MARRIAGE.

Women do not of themselves undertake intellectual labour—Their resignation to ignorance—Absence of scientific curiosity in women—They do not accumulate accurate knowledge—Archimedes in his bath—Rarity of inventions due to women—Exceptions.

Women do not of themselves undertake intellectual labour.

BEFORE saying much about the influence of marriage on the intellectual life, it is necessary to make some inquiry into the intellectual nature of women.

The first thing to be noted is that, with exceptions so rare as to be practically of no importance to an argument, women do not of themselves undertake intellectual labour. Even in the situations most favourable for labour of that kind, women do not undertake it unless they are urged to it, and directed in it, by some powerful masculine influence. In the absence of that influence, although their minds are active, that activity neither tends to discipline nor to the accumulation of knowledge. Women who are not impelled by some masculine

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influence are not superior, either in knowledge or discipline of the mind, at the age of fifty to what they were at the age of twenty-five. In other words, they have not in themselves the motive powers which can cause an intellectual advance.

The best illustration of this is a sisterhood of three or four rich old maids, with all the advantages of leisure. You will observe that they invariably remain, as to their education, where they were left by their teachers many years before. They will often lament, perhaps, that in their day education was very inferior to what it is now; but it never occurs to them that the large leisure of subsequent years might, had it been well employed, have supplied those deficiencies of which they are sensible. Nothing is more curiously remote from masculine habits than the resignation to particular degrees of ignorance, as to the inevitable, which a woman will express in a manner which says: "You know I am so; you know that I cannot make myself better informed." They are like perfect billiard-balls on a perfect table, which stop when no longer impelled, wherever they may happen to be.

Resignation to ignorance

Absence of intellectual initiative.

It is this absence of intellectual initiative which causes the great ignorance of women. What they have been well taught, that they know, but they do not increase their stores of knowledge. Even in what most interests them, theology, they repeat, but do not extend, their information. All the effort of their minds appears (so far as an outside observer may presume to judge) to act like water on a picture, which brings out the colours that already exist upon the canvas but does not add anything to the design. There is a great and perpetual freshness and vividness in their conceptions, which is often lacking

in our own. Our conceptions fade, and are replaced; theirs are not replaced, but refreshed.

What many women do for their theological conceptions or opinions, others do with reference to the innumerable series of questions of all kinds which present themselves in the course of life. They attempt to solve them by the help of knowledge acquired in girlhood; and if that cannot be done, they either give them up as beyond the domain of women, or else trust to hearsay for a solution. What they will *not* do is to hunt the matter out unaided, and get an accurate answer by dint of independent investigation.

Absence of scientific curiosity.

There is another characteristic of women, not peculiar to them, for many men have it in an astonishing degree, and yet more general in the female sex than in the male: I allude to the absence of scientific curiosity. Ladies see things of the greatest wonder and interest working in their presence and for their service without feeling impelled to make any inquiries into the manner of their working. I could mention many very curious instances of this, but I select one which seems typical. Many years ago I happened to be in a room filled with English ladies, most of whom were highly intelligent, and the conversation happened to turn upon a sailing-boat which belonged to me. One of the ladies observed that sails were not of much use, since they could only be available to push the boat in the direction of the wind; a statement which all the other ladies received with approbation. Now, all these ladies had seen ships working under canvas against head-winds, and they might have reflected that without that portion of the art of seamanship every vessel unprovided with steam would assuredly drift upon a lee-shore; but it was not in the feminine nature to make a scientific observa-

An example.

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tion of that kind. You will answer, perhaps, that I could scarcely expect ladies to investigate men's business, and that seamanship is essentially the business of our own sex. But the truth is, that all English people, no matter of what sex, have so direct an interest in the maritime activity of England, that they might reasonably be expected to know the one primary conquest on which for many centuries that activity has depended, the conquest of the opposing wind, the sublimest of the early victories of science. And this absence of curiosity in women extends to things they use every day. They never seem to want to know the insides of things as we do. All ladies know that steam makes a locomotive go; but they rest satisfied with that, and do not inquire further *how* the steam sets the wheels in motion. They know that it is necessary to wind up their watches, but they do not care to inquire into the real effects of that little exercise of force.

Absence of scientific curiosity extends to every-day things.

Now this absence of the investigating spirit has very wide and important consequences. The first consequence of it is that women do not naturally accumulate accurate knowledge. Left to themselves, they accept various kinds of teaching, but they do not by any analysis of their own either put that teaching to any serious intellectual test, or qualify themselves for any extension of it by independent and original discovery. We of the male sex are seldom clearly aware how much of our practical force, of the force which discovers and originates, is due to our common habit of analytical observation; yet it is scarcely too much to say that most of our inventions have been suggested by actually or intellectually pulling something else in pieces. And such of our discoveries as cannot be traced directly to

Its consequences.

Masculine capacity for receiving suggestions.

analysis are almost always due to habits of general observation which lead us to take note of some fact apparently quite remote from what it helps us to arrive at. One of the best instances of this indirect utility of habitual observation, as it is one of the earliest, is what occurred to Archimedes in his bath. When the water displaced by his body overflowed, he noticed the fact of displacement, and at once perceived its applicability to the cubic measurement of complicated bodies. It is possible that if his mind had not been exercised at the time about the adulteration of the royal crown, it would not have been led to anything by the overflowing of his bath; but the capacity to receive a suggestion of that kind is, I believe, a capacity exclusively masculine. A woman would have noticed the overflowing, but she would have noticed it only as a cause of disorder or inconvenience.

Rarity of inventions due to women.

This absence of the investigating and discovering tendencies in women is confirmed by the extreme rarity of inventions due to women, even in the things which most interest and concern them. The stocking-loom and the sewing-machine are the two inventions which would most naturally have been hit upon by women, for people are naturally inventive about things which relieve *themselves* of labour, or which increase their own possibilities of production; and yet the stocking-loom and the sewing-machine are both of them masculine ideas, carried out to practical efficiency by masculine energy and perseverance. So I believe that all the improvements in pianos are due to men, though women have used pianos much more than men have used them.

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This, then, is in my view the most important negative characteristic of women, that they do not push forwards intellectually by their own force. There have been a few instances in which they have written with power and originality, have become learned, and greatly superior, no doubt, to the majority of men. There are three or four women in England, and as many on the Continent, who have lived intellectually in harness for many years, and who unaffectedly delight in strenuous intellectual labour, giving evidence both of fine natural powers and the most persevering culture; but these women have usually been encouraged in their work by some near masculine influence. And even if it were possible, which it is not, to point to some female Archimedes or Leonardo da Vinci, it is not the rare exceptions which concern us, but the prevalent rule of Nature. Without desiring to compare our most learned ladies with anything so disagreeable to the eye as a bearded woman, I may observe that Nature generally has a few exceptions to all her rules, and that as women having beards are a physical exception, so women who naturally study and investigate are intellectual exceptions. Once more let me repudiate any malicious intention in establishing so unfortunate and *maladroite* an association of ideas, for nothing is less agreeable than a woman with a beard, whilst, on the contrary, the most intellectual of women may at the same time be the most permanently charming.

Cultivated women encouraged by masculine influence.

Exceptional women.

LETTER V.

TO A YOUNG GENTLEMAN WHO CONTEMPLATED MARRIAGE.

The danger of deviation—Danger from increased expenditure—Nowhere so great as in England—Complete absorption in business—Case of a tradesman—Case of a solicitor—The pursuit of comfort dangerous to the Intellectual Life—The meanness of its results—Fireside purposes—Danger of deviation in rich marriages—George Sand's study of this in her story of "Valvèdre."

AMONGST the dangers of marriage, one of those most to be dreaded by a man given to intellectual pursuits is the *deviation* which, in one way or other, marriage inevitably produces. It acts like the pointsman on a railway, who, by pulling a lever, sends the train in another direction. The married man never goes, or hardly ever goes, exactly on the same intellectual lines which he would have followed if he had remained a bachelor. This deviation may or may not be a gain; it is always a most serious danger.

Deviation resulting from marriage.

Sometimes the deviation is produced by the necessity for a stricter attention to money, causing a more unremitting application to work that pays well, and a proportionate neglect of that which can only give extension to our knowledge and clearness to our views.

Sometimes caused by pecuniary considerations.

In no country is this danger so great as it is in England, where the generally expensive manner of living, and the prevalent desire to keep families in an ideally perfect state of physical comfort, produce an absorption in business which in all but the rarest instances leaves no margin for intellectual labour. There are, no doubt, some remarkable examples of men earning a large income by a

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laborious profession, who have gained reputation in one of the sciences or in some branch of literature, but these are very exceptional cases. A man who works at his profession as most Englishmen with large families have to work, can seldom enjoy that surplus of nervous energy which would be necessary to carry him far in literature or science. I remember meeting an English tradesman on the railway between Paris and the coast, who told me that he was obliged to visit France very frequently, yet could not speak French, which was a great deficiency and inconvenience to him. "Why not learn?" I asked, and received the following answer:—

Case of an English tradesman.

"I have to work at my business all day long, and often far into the night. When the day's work is over I generally feel very tired, and want rest; but if I don't happen to feel quite so tired, then it is not work that I need, but recreation, of which I get very little. I never feel the courage to set to work at the French grammar, though it would be both pleasant and useful to me to know French; indeed, I constantly feel the want of it. It might, perhaps, be possible to learn from a phrase-book in the railway train, but to save time I always travel at night. Being a married man, I have to give my whole attention to my business."

Case of a solicitor.

A solicitor with a large practice in London held nearly the same language. He worked at his office all day, and often brought home the most difficult work for the quiet of his own private study after the household had gone to bed. The little reading that he could indulge in was light reading. In reality the profession intruded even on his few hours of leisure, for he read many of the columns in the *Times* which relate to law or legislation, and these make at the end of a few years an amount of reading

sufficient for the mastery of a foreign literature. This gentleman answered very accurately to M. Taine's description of the typical Englishman, absorbed in business and the *Times*.

Inward consciousness of deviation.

In these cases it is likely that the effect of marriage was not inwardly felt as a deviation; but when culture has been fairly begun, and marriage hinders the pursuit of it, or makes it deviate from the chosen path, then there is often an inward consciousness of the fact, not without its bitterness.

Effects of the pursuit of comfort.

A remarkable article on "Luxury," in the second volume of the *Cornhill Magazine*, deals with this subject in a manner evidently suggested by serious reflection and experience. The writer considers the effects of the pursuit of comfort (never carried so far as it is now) on the higher moral and intellectual life. The comforts of a bachelor were not what the writer meant; these are easily procured, and seldom require the devotion of all the energies. The "comfort" which is really dangerous to intellectual growth is that of a family establishment, because it so easily becomes the one absorbing object of existence. Men who began life with the feeling that they would willingly devote their powers to great purposes, like the noble examples of past times who laboured and suffered for the intellectual advancement of their race, and had starvation for their reward, or in some cases even the prison and the stake—men who in their youth felt themselves to be heirs of a nobility of spirit like that of Bruno, of Swammerdam, of Spinoza, have too often found themselves in the noon of life concentrating all the energies of body and soul on the acquisition of ugly millinery and uglier upholstery, and on spreading extravagant tables to feed uncultivated guests.

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"It is impossible," says the writer of the article just alluded to, "it is impossible to say why men were made, but assuming that they were made for some purpose, of which the faculties which they possess afford evidence, it follows that they were intended to do many other things besides providing for their families and enjoying their society. They were meant to know, to act, and to feel —to know everything which the mind is able to contemplate, to name, and to classify; to do everything which the will, prompted by the passions and guided by the conscience, can undertake; and, subject to the same guidance, to feel in its utmost vigour every emotion which the contemplation of the various persons and objects which surround us can excite. This view of the objects of life affords an almost infinite scope for human activity in different directions; but it also shows that it is in the highest degree dangerous to its beauty and its worth to allow any one side of life to become the object of idolatry; and there are many reasons for thinking that domestic happiness is rapidly assuming that position in the minds of the more comfortable classes of Englishmen. . . . It is a singular and affecting thing, to see how every manifestation of human energy bears witness to the shrewdness of the current maxim that a large income is a necessary of life. Whatever is done for money is done admirably well. Give a man a specific thing to make or to write, and pay him well for it, and you may with a little trouble secure an excellent article; but the ability which does these things so well, might have been and ought to have been trained to far higher things, which for the most part are left undone, because the clever workman thinks himself bound to earn what will keep himself, his wife, and his six or seven children, up

What men were intended to know and do.

Idolatry of domestic happiness.

Men do lower work than they might have done.

to the established standard of comfort. What was at first a necessity, perhaps an unwelcome one, becomes by degrees a habit and a pleasure, and men who might have done memorable and noble things, if they had learnt in time to consider the doing of such things an object worth living for, lose the power and the wish to live for other than fireside purposes."

But this kind of intellectual deviation, you may answer, is not strictly the consequence of marriage, *quâ* marriage; it is one of the consequences of a degree of relative poverty, produced by the larger expenditure of married life, but which might be just as easily produced by a certain degree of money-pressure in the condition of a bachelor. Let me therefore point out a kind of deviation which may be as frequently observed in rich marriages as in poor ones. Suppose the case of a bachelor with a small but perfectly independent income amounting to some hundreds a year, who is devoted to intellectual pursuits, and spends his time in study or with cultivated friends of his own, choosing friends whose society is an encouragement and a help. Suppose that this man makes an exceedingly prudent marriage, with a rich woman, you may safely predict, in this instance, intellectual deviations of a kind perilous to the highest culture. He will have new calls upon his time, his society will no longer be entirely of his own choosing, he will no longer be able to devote himself with absolute singleness of purpose to studies from which his wife must necessarily be excluded. If he were to continue faithful to his old habits, and shut himself up every day in his library or laboratory, or set out on frequent scientific expeditions, his wife would either be a lady of quite extraordinary perfection of temper, or else entirely

Deviation in rich marriages

New calls on time.

PART VII. LETTER V.

Loss of time after marriage.

indifferent in her feelings towards him, if she did not regard his pursuits with quickly-increasing jealousy. She would think, and justifiably think, that he ought to give more of his time to the enjoyment of her society, that he ought to be more by her side in the carriage and in the drawing-room, and if he loved her he would yield to these kindly and reasonable wishes. He would spend many hours of every day in a manner not profitable to his great pursuits, and many weeks of every year in visits to her friends. His position would be even less favourable to study in some respects than that of a professional man. It would be difficult for him, if an amateur artist, to give that unremitting attention to painting which the professional painter gives. He could not say, "I do this for you and for our children;" he could only say, "I do it for my own pleasure," which is not so graceful an excuse. As a bachelor, he might work as professional people work, but his marriage would strongly accentuate the amateur character of his position. It is possible that if his labours had won great fame the lady might bear the separation more easily, for ladies always take a noble pride in the celebrity of their husbands; but the best and worthiest intellectual labour often brings no fame whatever, and notoriety is a mere accident of some departments of the intellectual life, and not its ultimate object.

Valvèdre and his wife.

George Sand, in her admirable novel "Valvèdre," has depicted a situation of this kind with the most careful delicacy of touch. Valvèdre was a man of science, who attempted to continue the labours of his intellectual life after marriage had united him to a lady incapable of sharing them. The reader pities both, and sympathises with both. It is hard, on the one hand, that a man

endowed by nature with great talents for scientific work should not go on with a career already gloriously begun; and yet, on the other hand, a woman who is so frequently abandoned for science may blamelessly feel some jealousy of science.

Valvèdre, in narrating the story of his unhappy wedded life, said that Alida wished to have at her orders a perfect gentleman to accompany her, but that he felt in himself a more serious ambition. He had not aimed at fame, but he had thought it possible to become a useful servant, bringing his share of patient and courageous seekings to the edifice of the sciences. He had hoped that Alida would understand this. "'There is time enough for everything,' she said, still retaining him in the useless wandering life that she had chosen. 'Perhaps,' he answered, 'but on condition that I lose no more of it; and it is not in this wandering life, cut to pieces by a thousand unforeseen interruptions, that I can make the hours yield their profit.'

"'Ah! we come to the point!' exclaimed Alida impetuously. 'You wish to leave me, and to travel alone in impossible regions.'

"'No, I will work near you and abandon certain observations which it would be necessary to make at too great a distance, but you also will sacrifice something: we will not see so many idle people, we will settle somewhere for a fixed time. It shall be where you will, and if the place does not suit you, we will try another; but from time to time you will permit me a phase of sedentary work.'

"'Yes, yes, you want to live for yourself alone; you have lived enough for me. I understand; your love is satiated and at an end.'

PART VII. LETTER V. — *Valvèdre and his wife.*

"Nothing could conquer her conviction *that study was her rival*, and that love was only possible in idleness.

"'To love is everything,' she said; 'and he who loves has not time to concern himself with anything else. Whilst the husband is intoxicating himself with the marvels of science, the wife languishes and dies. It is the destiny which awaits me; and since I am a burden to you, I should do better to die at once.'

"A little later Valvèdre ventured to hint something about work, hoping to conquer his wife's *ennui*, on which she proclaimed the hatred of work as a sacred right of her nature and position.

"'Nobody ever taught me to work,' she said, 'and I did not marry under a promise to begin again at the *a*, *b*, *c* of things. Whatever I know I have learned by intuition, by reading without aim or method. I am a woman: my destiny is to love my husband and bring up children. It is very strange that my husband should be the person who counsels me to think of something better.'"

I am far from suggesting that Madame Valvèdre is an exact representative of her sex, but the sentiments which in her are exaggerated, and expressed with passionate plainness, are in a much milder form very prevalent sentiments indeed; and Valvèdre's great difficulty, how to get leave to prosecute his studies with the degree of devotion necessary to make them fruitful, is not at all an uncommon difficulty with intellectual men after marriage. The character of Madame Valvèdre, being passionate and excessive, led her to an open expression of her feelings; but feelings of a like kind, though milder in degree, exist frequently below the surface, and may be detected by any vigilant observer of human nature. That such feelings

are very natural it is impossible even for a *savant* to deny; but whilst admitting the clear right of a woman to be preferred by a man to science when once he has married her, let me observe that the man might perhaps do wisely, before the knot is tied, to ascertain whether her intellectual dowry is rich enough to compensate him for the sacrifices she is likely to exact.

LETTER VI.

TO A SOLITARY STUDENT.

Need of a near intellectual friendship in solitude—Persons who live independently of custom run a peculiar risk in marriage—Women by nature more subservient to custom than men are—Difficulty of conciliating solitude and marriage—De Sénancour—The marriages of eccentrics—Their wives either protect them or attempt to reform them.

ISOLATED as you are, by the very superiority of your culture, from the ignorant provincial world around you, I cannot but believe that marriage is essential to your intellectual health and welfare. If you married some cultivated woman, bred in the cultivated society of a great capital, that companionship would give you an independence of surrounding influences which nothing else can give. You fancy that by shutting yourself up in a country house you are uninfluenced by the world around you. It is a great error. You know that you are isolated, that you are looked upon and probably ridiculed as an eccentric, and this knowledge, which it is impossible to banish from your mind, deprives your thinking of elasticity and grace. You urgently need the support of an intellectual friendship quite near to you,

Value of a cultivated wife.

Evil of isolation.

PART VII. LETTER VI.

under your own roof. Bachelors in great cities feel this necessity less.

Still remember, that whoever has arranged his life independently of custom runs a peculiar risk in marriage. Women are by nature far more subservient to custom than we are, more than we can easily conceive.

Danger of marriage for eccentrics.

The danger of marriage, for a person of your tastes, is that a woman entering your house might enter it as the representative of that minutely-interfering authority which you continually ignore. And let us never forget that a perfect obedience to custom requires great sacrifices of time and money that you might not be disposed to make, and which certainly would interfere with study.

Value of solitude.

You value and enjoy your solitude, well knowing how great a thing it is to be master of all your hours. It is difficult to conciliate solitude, or even a wise and suitable selection of acquaintances, with the semi-publicity of marriage. Heads of families receive many persons in their houses whom they would never have invited, and from whose society they derive little pleasure and no profit.

De Sénancour.

De Sénancour had plans of studious retirement, and hoped that the "*douce intimité*" of marriage might be compatible with these cherished projects. But marriage, he found, drew him into the circle of ordinary provincial life, and he always suffered from its influences.

You are necessarily an eccentric. In the neighbourhood where you live it is an eccentricity to study, for nobody but you studies anything. A man so situated is fortunate when this feeling of eccentricity is alleviated, and unfortunate when it is increased. A wife would certainly do one or the other. Married to a very superior woman, able to understand the devotion to intellectual

aims, you would be much relieved of the painful consciousness of eccentricity; but a woman of less capacity would intensify it.

So far as we can observe the married life of others, it seems to me that I have met with instances of men, constituted and occupied very much as you are, who have found in marriage a strong protection against the ignorant judgments of their neighbours, and an assurance of intellectual peace; whilst in other cases it has appeared rather as if their solitude were made more a cause of conscious suffering, as if the walls of their cabinets were pulled down for the boobies outside to stare at them and laugh at them. A woman will either take your side against the customs of the little world around, or she will take the side of custom against you. If she loves you deeply, and if there is some visible result of your labours in fame and money, she may possibly do the first, and then she will protect your tranquillity better than a force of policemen, and give you a delightful sense of reconciliation with all humanity; but many of her most powerful instincts tend the other way. She has a natural sympathy with all the observances of custom, and you neglect them; she is fitted for social life, which you are not. Unless you win her wholly to your side, she may undertake the enterprise of curing your eccentricities and adapting you to the ideal of her caste. This may be highly satisfactory to the operator, but it is full of inconveniences to the patient.

Protection of marriage.

Curing eccentricities.

PART VII.
LETTER VII.

LETTER VII.

TO A LADY OF HIGH CULTURE WHO FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO ASSOCIATE WITH PERSONS OF HER OWN SEX.

Men are not very good judges of feminine conversation—The interest of it would be increased if women could be more freely initiated into great subjects—Small subjects interesting when seen in relation to central ideas—That ladies of superior faculty ought rather to elevate female society than withdraw from it—Women when displaced do not appear happy.

WHAT you confided to me in our last interesting conversation has given me material for reflection, and afforded a glimpse of a state of things which I have sometimes suspected without having data for any positive conclusion. The society of women is usually sought by men during hours of mental relaxation, and we naturally find such a charm in their mere presence, especially when they are graceful or beautiful, that we are not very severe or even accurate judges of the abstract intellectual quality of their talk. But a woman cannot feel the indescribable charm which wins us so easily, and I have sometimes thought that a superior person of your sex might be aware of certain deficiencies in her sisters which men very readily overlook. You tell me that you feel embarrassed in the society of ladies, because they know so little about the subjects which interest you, and are astonished when you speak about anything really worth attention. On the other hand, you feel perfectly at ease with men of ability and culture, and most at your ease with men of the best ability and the most eminent attainments. What you complain of chiefly in women seems

Deficiencies in female society.

to be their impatience of varieties of thought which are unfamiliar to them, and their constant preference for small topics.

It has long been felt by men that if women could be more freely initiated into great subjects the interest of general conversation would be much increased. The difficulty appears to lie in their instinctive habit of making all questions personal questions. The etiquette of society makes it quite impossible for men to speak to ladies in the manner which would be intellectually most profitable to them. We may not teach because it is pedantic, and we may not contradict, because it is rude. Most of the great subjects are conventionally held to be closed, so that it is a sin against good taste to discuss them. In every house the ladies have a set of fixed convictions of some kind, which it is not polite in any man to appear to doubt. The consequence of these conventional rules is that women live in an atmosphere of acquiescence which makes them intolerant of anything like bold and original thinking on important subjects. But as the mind always requires free play of some kind, when all the great subjects are forbidden it will use its activity in playing about little ones.

Etiquette unfavourable to women.

Closed subjects.

For my part I hardly think it desirable for any of us to be incessantly coping with great subjects, and the ladies are right in taking a lively interest in the small events around them. But even the small events would have a deeper interest if they were seen in their true relations to the great currents of European thought and action. It is probably the ignorance of these relations which, more than the smallness of the topics themselves, makes feminine talk fatiguing to you. Very small things indeed have an interest when exhibited in relation to larger, as

Interest in small events.

PART VII. LETTER VII.

What gives interest to conversation.

men of science are continually demonstrating. I have been taking note lately of the talk that goes on around me, and I find that when it is shallow and wearisome it is always because the facts mentioned bear no reference to any central or governing idea, and do not illustrate anything. Conversation is interesting in proportion to the originality of the central ideas which serve as pivots, and the fitness of the little facts and observations which are contributed by the talkers. For instance, if people happened to be talking about rats, and some one informed you that he had seen a rat last week, that would be quite uninteresting; but you would listen with greater attention if he said: "The other night, as I was going upstairs very late, I followed a very fine rat who was going upstairs too, and he was not in the least hurried, but stopped after every two or three steps to have a look at me and my candle. He was very prettily marked about the face and tail, so I concluded that he was not a common rat, but probably a lemming. Two nights afterwards I met him again, and this time he seemed almost to know me, for he quietly made room for me as I passed. Very likely he might be easily tamed." This is interesting, because, though the fact narrated is still trifling, it illustrates animal character.

The tone of conversation may be raised.

If you will kindly pardon an "improvement" of this subject, as a preacher would call it, I might add that an intellectual lady like yourself might, perhaps, do better to raise the tone of the feminine talk around her than to withdraw from it in weariness. There are always, in every circle, a few superior persons who, either from natural diffidence, or because they are not very rich, or because they are too young, suffer themselves to be entirely overwhelmed by the established mediocrity

around them. What they need is a leader, a deliverer. Is it not in your power to render services of this kind? Could you not select from the younger ladies whom you habitually meet, a few who, like yourself, feel bored by the dulness or triviality of what you describe as the current feminine conversation? There is often a painful shyness which prevents people of real ability from using it for the advantage of others, and this shyness is nowhere so common as in England, especially provincial England. It feels the want of a hardy example. A lady who talked really well would no doubt run some risk of being rather unpleasantly isolated at first, but surely, if she tried, she might ultimately find accomplices. You could do much, to begin with, by recommending high-toned literature, and gradually awakening an interest in what is truly worth attention. It seems lamentable that every cultivated woman should be forced out of the society of her own sex, and made to depend upon ours for conversation of that kind which is an absolute necessity to the intellectual. The truth is, that women so displaced never appear altogether happy. And culture costs so much downright hard work, that it ought not to be paid for by any suffering beyond those toils which are its fair and natural price.

Shyness of able people.

Need of a hardy example.

Displaced women.

LETTER VIII.

TO A LADY OF HIGH CULTURE.

Greatest misfortune in the intellectual life of women—They do not hear truth—Men disguise their thoughts for women—Cream and curaçoa—Probable permanence of the desire to please women—Most truth in cultivated society—Hopes from the increase of culture.

I THINK that the greatest misfortune in the intellectual life of women is that they do not hear the truth from men.

What men say to women.

All men in cultivated society say to women as much as possible that which they may be supposed to wish to hear, and women are so much accustomed to this that they can scarcely hear without resentment an expression of opinion which takes no account of their personal and private feeling. The consideration for the feelings of women gives an agreeable tone to society, but it is fatal to the severity of truth. Observe a man of the world whose opinions are well known to you,—notice the little pause before he speaks to a lady. During that little pause he is turning over what he has to say, so as to present it in the manner that will please her best; and you may be sure that the integrity of truth will suffer in the process. If we compare what we know of the man with that which the lady hears from him, we perceive the immense disadvantages of her position. He ascertains what will please her, and that is what he administers. He professes to take a deep interest in things which he does not care for in the least, and he passes lightly over subjects and events which he knows to be of the most

How men address women.

momentous importance to the world. The lady spends an hour more agreeably than if she heard opinions which would irritate, and prognostics which would alarm her, but she has missed an opportunity for culture, she has been confirmed in feminine illusions. If this happened only from time to time, the effect would not tell so much on the mental constitution; but it is incessant, it is continual. Men disguise their thoughts for women as if to venture into the feminine world were as dangerous as travelling in Arabia, or as if the thoughts themselves were criminal.

Men disguise their thoughts for women.

There appeared two or three years ago in *Punch* a clever drawing which might have served as an illustration to this subject. A fashionable doctor was visiting a lady in Belgravia who complained that she suffered from debility. Cod-liver oil being repugnant to her taste, the agreeable doctor, wise in his generation, blandly suggested as an effective substitute a mixture of cream and curaçoa. What that intelligent man did for his patient's physical constitution, all men of politeness do for the intellectual constitution of ladies. Instead of administering the truth which would strengthen, though unpalatable, they administer intellectual cream and curaçoa.

Cream and curaçoa.

The primary cause of this tendency to say what is most pleasing to women is likely to be as permanent as the distinction of sex itself. It springs directly from sexual feelings, it is hereditary and instinctive. Men will never talk to women with that rough frankness which they use between themselves. Conversation between the sexes will always be partially insincere. Still I think that the more women are respected, the more men will desire to be approved by them for what they are in reality, and the less they will care for approval which

Sexual feeling.

PART VII. LETTER VIII.

is obtained by dissimulation. It may be observed already that, in the most intellectual society of great capitals, men are considerably more outspoken before women than they are in the provincial middle-classes. Where women have most culture, men are most open and sincere. Indeed, the highest culture has a direct tendency to command sincerity in others, both because it is tolerant of variety in opinion, and because it is so penetrating that dissimulation is felt to be of no use. By the side of an uncultivated woman, a man feels that if he saps anything different from what she has been accustomed to she will take offence, whilst if he says anything beyond the narrow range of her information he will make her cold and uncomfortable. The most honest of men, in such a position, finds it necessary to be very cautious, and can scarcely avoid a little insincerity. But with a woman of culture equal to his own, these causes for apprehension have no existence, and he can safely be more himself.

Good effects of high culture.

Hopes for the future.

These considerations lead me to hope that as culture becomes more general women will hear truth more frequently. Whenever this comes to pass, it will be, to them, an immense intellectual gain.

LETTER IX.

TO A YOUNG MAN OF THE MIDDLE CLASS, WELL EDUCATED, WHO COMPLAINED THAT IT WAS DIFFICULT FOR HIM TO LIVE AGREEABLY WITH HIS MOTHER, A PERSON OF SOMEWHAT AUTHORITATIVE DISPOSITION, BUT UNEDUCATED.

A sort of misunderstanding common in modern households—Intolerance of inaccuracy—A false position—A lady not easily intimidated—Difficulty of arguing when you have to teach—Instance about the American War—The best course in discussion with ladies—Women spoilt by non-contradiction—They make all questions personal—The strength of their feelings—Their indifference to matters of fact.

I HAVE been thinking a good deal, and seriously, since we last met, about the subject of our conversation, which though a painful one is not to be timidly avoided. The degree of unhappiness in your little household, which ought to be one of the pleasantest of households, yet which, as you confided to me, is overshadowed by a continual misunderstanding, is, I fear, very common indeed at the present day. It is only by great forbearance, and great skill, that any household in which persons of very different degrees of culture have to live together on terms of equality, can be maintained in perfect peace; and neither the art nor the forbearance is naturally an attribute of youth. A man whose scholarly attainments were equal to your own, and whose experience of men and women was wider, could no doubt offer you counsel both wise and practical, yet I can hardly say that I should like you better if you followed it. I cannot blame you for having the natural characteristics of your years, an honest love of the best truth that you have attained to,

Unhappiness in certain households.

Characteristics of youth.

PART VII. LETTER IX.

was the embarrassed and unwilling witness. Your mother vehemently affirmed that all the Southern States had been under Jefferson Davis, that she knew the fact perfectly, that it had always been known to everyone during the war, and that, consequently, as the Argentine Republic was in South America, the Argentine Republic had been under Jefferson Davis. Rapidly warming with this discussion, your mother "supposed that you would deny next that there had ever been such a thing as a war between the North and the South." Then you, in your turn, lost temper, and you fetched an atlas for the purpose of explaining that the Southern division of the continent of America was not the Southern half of the United States. You were landed, as people always are landed when they prosecute an argument with the ignorant, in the thankless office of the schoolmaster. You were actually trying to give your mother a lesson in geography! She was not grateful to you for your didactic attentions. She glanced at the book as people glance at an offered dish which they dislike. She does not understand maps; the representation of places in geographical topography has never been quite clear to her. Your little geographical lecture irritated, but did not inform; it clouded the countenance, but did not illuminate the understanding. The distinction between South America and the Southern States is not easy to the non-analytic mind under any circumstances, but when *amour propre* is involved it becomes impossible.

A discussion.

I believe that the best course in discussions of this kind with ladies is simply to say *once* what is true, for the acquittal of your own conscience, but after that to remain silent on that topic, leaving the last word to the lady who will probably simply re-affirm what she has already

The best course in discussion with ladies.

said. For example, in the discussion about the Argentine Republic, your proper course would have been to say first, firmly, that the territory in question was not a part of the seceded States and had never been in the Union, with a brief and decided geographical explanation. Your mother would not have been convinced by this, and would probably have had the last word, but the matter would have ended there. Another friend of mine, who is in a position very like your own, goes a step farther, and is determined to agree with his mother-in-law in everything. He always assents to her propositions. She is a Frenchwoman, and has been accustomed to use *Algérie* and *Afrique* as convertible terms. Somebody spoke of the Cape of Good Hope as being in Africa. "Then it belongs to France, as Africa belongs to France." "Oui, chère mère," he answered, in his usual formula; "vous avez raison."

Resolution to agree.

He alluded to this afterwards when we were alone together. "I was foolish enough some years since," he said, "to argue with my *belle mère* and try to teach her little things from time to time, but it kept her in a state of chronic ill-humour and led to no good; it spoiled her temper, and it did not improve her mind. But since I have adopted the plan of perpetual assent we get on charmingly. Whatever she affirms I assent to at once, and all is well. My friends are in the secret, and so no contradictory truth disturbs our amiable tranquillity."

Perpetual assent.

A system of this kind spoils women completely, and makes the least contradiction intolerable to them. It is better that they should at least have the opportunity of hearing truth, though no attempt need be made to force it upon them. The position of ladies of the generation which preceded ours is in many respects a very trying

That it spoils women.

PART VII. LETTER IX.

one, and we do not always adequately realize it. A lady like your mother, who never really went through any intellectual discipline, who has no notion of intellectual accuracy in anything, is compelled by the irresistible feminine instinct to engage her strongest feelings in every discussion that arises. A woman can rarely detach her mind from questions of persons to apply it to questions of fact. She does not think simply, "Is that true of such a thing?" but she thinks, "Does he love me or respect me?" The facts about the Argentine Republic and the American War were probably quite indifferent to your mother; but your opposition to what she had asserted seemed to her a failure in affection, and your attempt to teach her a failure in respect. This feeling in women is far from being wholly egoistic. They refer everything to persons, but not necessarily to their own persons. Whatever you affirm as a fact, they find means of interpreting as loyalty or disloyalty to some person whom they either venerate or love, to the head of religion, or of the State, or of the family. Hence it is always dangerous to enter upon intellectual discussion of any kind with women, for you are almost certain to offend them by setting aside the sentiments of veneration, affection, love, which they have in great strength, in order to reach accuracy in matters of fact, which they neither have nor care for.

That women make all questions personal questions.

PART VIII.

ARISTOCRACY AND DEMOCRACY.

LETTER I.

TO A YOUNG ENGLISH NOBLEMAN.

A contrast—A poor student—His sad fate—Class-sentiment—Tycho Brahe—Robert Burns—Shelley's opinion of Byron—Charles Dickens—Shopkeepers in English literature—Pride of aristocratic ignorance—Pursuits tabooed by the spirit of caste—Affected preferences in intellectual pursuits—Studies that add to gentility—Sincerity of interest needed for genuine culture—The exclusiveness of scholarly caste—Its bad influence on outsiders—Feeling of Burns towards scholars—Sureness of class-instinct—Unforeseen effect of railways—Return to nomadic life and the chase—Advantages and possibilities of life in the higher classes.

IT is one of the privileges of authorship to have correspondents in the most widely different positions, and by means of their frank and friendly letters (usually much more frank than any oral communication) to gain a singularly accurate insight into the working of circumstances on the human intellect and character. The same post that brought me your last letter brought news about another of my friends whose lot has been a striking contrast to your own.[1]

[1] I think it right to inform the reader that there is no fiction in this letter.

PART VIII. LETTER I.

daily studies. In the winters, however, the diseased limb gave him prolonged agony, and in the autumn of 1872, to avoid the months of torture that lay before him, he had himself put in the railway and sent off, in his bed, to Edinburgh, sleeping in a waiting-room on the way. There was no one to attend him, but he trusted, not vainly, to the humanity of strangers. Just about the same time your lordship went northwards also, with many friends, to enjoy the noble scenery, and the excitement of noble sport. My poor cripple got to Edinburgh, got a glimpse of Scott's monument and the Athenian pillars, and submitted himself to the surgeons. They rendered him the best of services, for they ended his pains for ever.

A sad end.

So I am to get no more of those wonderfully brave and cheerful letters that were written from the little bed on wheels. I miss them for the lessons they quite unconsciously conveyed. He fancied that he was the learner, poor lad! and I the teacher, whereas it was altogether the other way. He made me feel what a blessing it is, even from the purely intellectual point of view, to be able to get out of bed after the night's rest, and go from one room to another. He made me understand the value of every liberty and every power, whilst at the same time he taught me to bear more patiently every limit, and inconvenience, and restriction.

Teachings.

In comparing his letters with yours I have been struck by one reflection predominantly, which is, the entire absence of class-sentiment in both of you. Nobody, not in the secret, could guess that one set of letters came from a palace and the other set from a poor miner's cottage; and even to me, who do not see the habitations except by an effort of the memory or imagination, there is nothing to recall the immensity of

Absence of class-sentiment.

the social distance that separated my two friendly and welcome correspondents. It is clear, of course, that one of them had enjoyed greater advantages than the other, but neither wrote from the point of view which marks his caste or class. It was my habit to write to you, and to him, exactly in the same tone, yet this was not felt to be unsuitable by either.

Class-views narrow the mind.

Is it not that the love and pursuit of culture lead each of us out of his class, and that class-views of any kind, whether of the aristocracy, or of the middle class, or of the people, inevitably narrow the mind and hinder it from receiving pure truth? Have you ever known any person who lived habitually in the notions of a caste, high or low, without incapacitating himself in a greater or less degree for breadth and delicacy of perception? It seems to me that the largest and best minds, although they have been born and nurtured in this caste or that, and may continue to conform externally to its customs, always emancipate themselves from it intellectually, and arrive at a sort of neutral region, where the light is colourless, and clear, and equal, like plain daylight out of doors. So soon as we attain the forgetfulness of self, and become absorbed in our pursuits for their own sakes, the feeling of caste drops off from us. It was not a mark of culture in Tycho Brahe, but rather of the imperfections of his culture, that he felt so strongly the difficulty of conciliating scientific pursuits with the obligations of noble birth, and began his public discourses on astronomy by telling his audience that the work was ill-suited to his social position—hesitating, too, even about authorship from a dread of social degradation. And to take an instance from the opposite extreme of human society, Robert Burns betrayed the same imperfection of culture in his

PART VIII. LETTER I.

dedication to the members of the Caledonian Hunt, when he spoke of his "honest rusticity," and told the gentlefolks that he was "bred to the plough, and independent." Both of these men had been unfavourably situated for the highest culture, the one by the ignorance of his epoch, the other by the ignorance of his class; hence this uneasiness about themselves and their social position. Shelley said of Byron, "The canker of aristocracy wants to be cut out;" and he did not say this from the point of view of a democrat, for Shelley was not precisely a democrat, but from the broadly human point of view, on which the finest intellects like to take their stand. Shelley perceived that Byron's aristocracy narrowed him, and made his sympathies less catholic than they might have been, nor can there be any doubt of the accuracy of this estimate of Shelley's; if a doubt existed it would be removed by Byron's alternative for a poet, "solitude, or high life." Another man of genius, whose loss we have recently deplored, was narrowed by his antipathy to the aristocratic spirit, though it is necessary to add, in justice, that it did not prevent him from valuing the friendship of noblemen whom he esteemed. The works of Charles Dickens would have been more accurate as pictures of English life, certainly more comprehensively accurate, if he could have felt for the aristocracy that hearty and loving sympathy which he felt for the middle classes and the people. But the narrowness of Dickens is more excusable than that of Byron, because a kindly heart more easily enters into the feelings of those whom it can often pity than of those who appear to be lifted above pity (though this is nothing but an appearance) and also because it is the habit of aristocracies to repel such sympathy by their manners, which the poor do not.

Canker of aristocracy.

Byron.

Dickens.

English authors on shopkeepers.

I have often thought that a sign of aristocratic narrowness in many English authors, including some of the most popular authors of the day, is the way they speak of shopkeepers. This may be due to simple ignorance; but if so, it is ignorance that might be easily avoided. Happily for our convenience there are a great many shopkeepers in England, so that there is no lack of the materials for study; but our novelists appear to consider this important class of Englishmen as unworthy of any patient and serious portraiture. You may remember Mr. Anthony Trollope's "Struggles of Brown, Jones, and Robinson," which appeared in the *Cornhill Magazine*, under Thackeray's editorship. That was an extreme instance of the way the class is treated in our literature: and then in poetry we have some disdainful verses of Mr. Tennyson's. It may be presumed that there is material for grave and respectful treatment of this extensive class, but our poets and novelists do not seem to have discovered, or sought to discover, the secret of that treatment. The intensity of the prejudices of caste prevents them from seeing any possibility of true gentlemanhood in a draper or a grocer, and blinds them to the æsthetic beauty or grandeur which may be as perfectly compatible with what is disdainfully called "counter-jumping" as it is admitted to be with the jumping of five-barred gates.

Mr Anthony Trollope.

Tennyson.

Pride in ignorance

The same caste prejudices have often kept the entire mass of the upper classes in ignorance of most valuable and important branches of knowledge. The poor have been ignorant, yet never proud of their ignorance; the ignorance that men are proud of belongs to caste always, not always to what we should call an aristocratic caste, but to the caste-feeling in one class or

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Waste of life due to the pride of caste.

another. The pride of the feudal baron in being totally illiterate amounted to self-exclusion from all intellectual culture, and we may still find living instances of partial self-exclusion from culture, of which pride is the only motive. There are people who pass their time in what are considered amusements (that do not amuse), because it seems to them a more gentlemanly sort of life than the devotion to some great and worthy pursuit which would have given the keenest zest and relish to their whole existence (besides making them useful members of society, which they are not), but which happens to be tabooed for them by the prejudices of their caste. There are many studies, in themselves noble and useful, that a man of good family cannot follow with the earnestness and the sacrifice of time necessary to success in them, without incurring the disapprobation of his friends. If this disapprobation were visited on the breaker of caste-regulations because he neglected some other culture, there would still be something reasonable in it; but this is not the case. The caste-regulation forbids the most honourable and instructive labour when it does not forbid the most unprofitable idleness, the most utter throwing away of valuable time and faculty. Tycho Brahe feared to lose caste in becoming the most illustrious astronomer of his time; but he would have had no such apprehension, nor any ground for such apprehension, if instead of being impelled to noble work by a high intellectual instinct, he had been impelled by meaner passions to unlimited self-indulgence. Even in our own day these prejudices are still strong enough, or have been until very lately, to keep our upper classes in great darkness about natural knowledge of all kinds, and about its application to the arts of life. How few

Tycho Brahe.

gentlemen have been taught to draw accurately, and how few are accurately acquainted with the great practical inventions of the age! The caste-sentiment does not, in these days, keep them ignorant of literature, but it keeps them ignorant of *things*. A friend who had a strong constructive and experimental turn, told me that, as a rule, he found gentlemen less capable of entering into his ideas than common joiners and blacksmiths, because these humble workmen, from their habit of dealing with matter, had acquired some experience of its nature. For my own part, I have often been amazed by the difficulty of making something clear to a classically educated gentleman which any intelligent mechanic would have seen to the bottom, and all round, after five or six minutes of explanation. There is a certain French nobleman whose ignorance I have frequent opportunities of fathoming, always with fresh astonishment at the depths of it, and I declare that he knows no more about the properties of stone, and timber, and metal, than if he were a cherub in the clouds of heaven!

Ignorance of things.

Gentlemen and mechanics.

A French nobleman.

But there is something in caste-sentiment even more prejudicial to culture than ignorance itself, and that is the affectation of strong preferences for certain branches of knowledge in which people are not seriously interested. There is nothing which people will not pretend to like, if a liking for it is supposed to be one of the marks and indications of gentility. There has been an immense amount of this kind of affectation in regard to classical scholarship, and we know for a certainty that it *is* affectation whenever people are loud in their praise of classical authors whom they never take the trouble to read. It may have happened to you, as it has happened to me from time to time, to hear men affirm the absolute

Affected preferences.

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necessity of classical reading to distinction of thought and manner, and yet to be aware at the same time, from close observation of their habits, that those very men entirely neglected the sources of that culture in which they professed such earnest faith. The explanation is, that as classical accomplishments are considered to be one of the evidences of gentility, whoever speaks loudly in their favour affirms that he has the tastes and preferences of a gentleman. It is like professing the fashionable religion, or belonging to an aristocratic shade of opinion in politics. I have not a doubt that all affectations of this kind are injurious to genuine culture, for genuine culture requires sincerity of interest before everything, and the fashionable affectations, so far from attracting sincere men to the departments of learning which happen to be *à la mode*, positively drive them away, just as many have become Nonconformists because the established religion was considered necessary to gentility, who might have remained contented with its ordinances as a simple discipline for their souls.

Affectations.

That they repel the sincere.

I dislike the interference of genteel notions in our studies for another reason. They deprive such culture as we may get from them, of one of the most precious results of culture, the enlargement of our sympathy for others. If we encourage ourselves in the pride of scholarly caste, so far as to imagine that we who have made Latin verses are above comparison with all who have never exercised their ingenuity in that particular way, we are not likely to give due and serious attention to the ideas of people whom we are pleased to consider uneducated; and yet it may happen that these people are sometimes our intellectual superiors, and that their ideas concern us very closely. But this is only half the

That they narrow our sympathy.

How Burns felt himself separated from culture.

evil. The consciousness of our contempt embitters the feelings of men in other castes, and prevents them from accepting our guidance when it might be of the greatest practical utility to them. I may mention Robert Burns as an instance of a man of genius who would have been happier and more fortunate if he had felt no barrier of separation between himself and the culture of his time. His poetry is as good rustic poetry as the best that has come down to us from antiquity, and instead of feeling towards the poets of times past the kind of soreness which a parvenu feels towards families of ancient descent, he ought rather to have rejoiced in the consciousness that he was their true and legitimate successor, as the clergy of an authentic Church feel themselves to be successors and representatives of saints and apostles who are gathered to their everlasting rest. But poor Burns knew that in an age when what is called scholarship gave all who had acquired it a right to look down upon poets who had only genius as the illegitimate offspring of nature, his position had not that solidity which belonged to the scholarly caste, and the result was a perpetual uneasiness which broke out in frequent defiance.

Burns.

"There's ither poets, much your betters,
Far seen in Greek, deep men o' letters,
Hae thought they had ensur'd their debtors
A' future ages;
Now moths deform in shapeless tatters,
Their unknown pages."

And again, in another poem—

"A set o' dull, conceited hashes
Confuse their brains in college classes!
They gang in stirks, and come out asses,
Plain truth to speak;
An' syne they think to climb Parnassus
By dint o' Greek!"

PART VIII. LETTER I.

Injustice of Burns towards scholars.

It was the influence of caste that made Burns write in this way, and how unjust it was every modern reader knows. The great majority of poets have been well-educated men, and instead of ganging into college like stirks and coming out like asses, they have, as a rule, improved their poetic faculty by an acquaintance with the masterpieces of their art. Yet Burns is not to be blamed for this injustice; he sneered at Greek because Greek was the mark of a disdainful and exclusive caste, but he never sneered at French or Italian. He had no soreness against culture for its own sake; it was the pride of caste that galled him.

How surely the wonderful class-instinct guided the aristocracy to the kind of learning likely to be the most effectual barrier against fellowship with the mercantile classes and the people! The uselessness of Greek in industry and commerce was a guarantee that those who had to earn their bread would never find time to master it, and even the strange difficult look of the alphabet (though in reality the alphabet was a gate of gossamer), ensured a degree of awful veneration for those initiated into its mysteries. Then the habit our forefathers had of quoting Latin and Greek to keep the ignorant in their places, was a strong defensive weapon of their caste, and they used it without scruple. Every year removes this passion for exclusiveness farther and farther into the past; every year makes learning of every kind less available as the armour of a class, and less to be relied upon as a means of social advancement and consideration. Indeed, we have already reached a condition which is drawing back many members of the aristocracy to a state of feeling about intellectual culture resembling that of their forefathers in the middle ages. The old bar

Employment of the learned languages as a defence of caste.

barian feeling has revived of late, a feeling which (if it were self-conscious enough) might find expression in some such words as these :—

Ostentation in amusement

"It is not by learning and genius that we can hold the highest place, but by the dazzling exhibition of external splendour in those costly pleasures which are the plainest evidence of our power. Let us have beautiful equipages on the land, beautiful yachts upon the sea; let our recreations be public and expensive, that the people may not easily lose sight of us, and may know that there is a gulf of difference between our life and theirs. Why should we toil at books that the poorest students read, we who have lordly pastimes for every month in the year? To be able to revel immensely in pleasures which those below us taste rarely or not at all, this is the best evidence of our superiority. So let us take them magnificently, like English princes and lords."

Unforeseen result of railways.

Even the invention of railways has produced the entirely unforeseen result of a return in the direction of barbarism. If there is one thing which distinguishes civilization it is fixity of residence; and it is essential to the tranquil following of serious intellectual purposes that the student should remain for many months of the year in his own library or laboratory, surrounded by all his implements of culture. But there are people of the highest rank in the England of to-day whose existence is as much nomadic as that of Red Indians in the reserved territories of North America. You cannot ascertain their whereabouts without consulting the most recent newspaper. Their life may be quite accurately described as a return, on a scale of unprecedented splendour and comfort, to the life of tribes in that stage of human develop-

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ment which is known as the period of the chase. They migrate from one hunting-ground to another as the diminution of the game impels them. Their residences, vast and substantial as they are, serve only as tents and wigwams. The existence of a monk in the cloister, of a prisoner in a fortress, is more favourable to the intellect than theirs.

Advantages of an English noble.

And yet, notwithstanding these re-appearances of the savage nature at the very summit of modern civilization, the life of a great English nobleman of to-day commands so much of what the intellectual know to be truly desirable, that it seems as if only a little firmness of resolution were needed to make all advantages his own. Surrounded by every aid, and having all gates open, he sees the paths of knowledge converging towards him like railways to some rich central city. He has but to choose his route, and travel along it with the least possible hindrance from every kind of friction, in the society of the best companions, and served by the most perfectly-trained attendants. Might not our lords be like those brilliant peers who shone like intellectual stars around the throne of Elizabeth, and our ladies like that great lady of whom said a learned Italian, "che non vi aveva altra dama al mondo che la pareggiasse nella cognizione delle arti e nella notizia delle scienze e delle lingue," wherefore he called her boldly, in the enthusiasm of his admiration, "*grande anfitrite, Diana, nume della terra!*"

LETTER II.

TO AN ENGLISH DEMOCRAT.

The liberal and illiberal spirit of aristocracy—The desire to draw a line—Substitution of external limitations for realities—The high life of nature—Value of gentlemen in a State—Odiousness of the narrow class-spirit—Julian Fane—Perfect knighthood—Democracies intolerant of dignity—Tendency of democracies to fix one uniform type of manners—That type not a high one—A descriptive anecdote—Knowledge and taste reveal themselves in manners—Dr. Arnold on the absence of gentlemen in France and Italy—Absence of a class with traditional good manners—Language defiled by the vulgarity of popular taste—Influence of aristocratic opinion limited, that of democratic opinion universal—Want of elevation in the French *bourgeoisie*—Spirit of the provincial democracy—Spirit of the Parisian democracy—Sentiments and acts of the Communards—Romantic feeling towards the past—Hopes for liberal culture in the democratic idea—Aristocracies think too much of persons and positions—That we ought to forget persons and apply our minds to things, and phenomena, and ideas.

ALL you say against the narrowness of the aristocratic spirit is true and to the point; but I think that you and your party are apt to confound together two states of feeling which are essentially distinct from each other. There is an illiberal spirit of aristocracy, and there is also a liberal one. The illiberal spirit does not desire to improve itself, having a full and firm belief in its own absolute perfection; its sole anxiety is to exclude others, to draw a circular line, the smaller the better, provided always that it gets inside and can keep the millions out. We see this spirit, not only in reference to birth, but in even fuller activity with regard to education and employment—in the preference for certain schools and colleges,

Illiberal spirit of aristocracy.

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for class reasons, without regard to the quality of the teaching—in the contempt for all professions but two or three, without regard to the inherent baseness or nobility of the work that has to be done in them: so that the question asked by persons of this temper is not whether a man has been well trained in his youth, but if he has been to Eton and Oxford; not whether he is honourably laborious in his manhood, but whether he belongs to the Bar, or the Army, or the Church. This spirit is evil in its influence, because it substitutes external limitations for the realities of the intellect and the soul, and makes those realities themselves of no account wherever its traditions prevail. This spirit cares nothing for culture, nothing for excellence, nothing for the superiorities that make men truly great; all it cares for is to have reserved seats in the great assemblage of the world. Whatever you do, in fairness and honesty, against this evil and inhuman spirit of aristocracy, the best minds of this age approve; but there is another spirit of aristocracy which does not always receive the fairest treatment at your hands, and which ought to be resolutely defended against you.

Substitution of external limitations for realities.

There is really, in nature, such a thing as high life. There is really, in nature, a difference between the life of a gentleman who has culture, and fine bodily health, and independence, and the life of a Sheffield dry-grinder who cannot have any one of these three things. It is a good and not a bad sign of the state of popular intelligence when the people does not wilfully shut its eyes to the differences of condition amongst men, and when those who have the opportunity of leading what is truly the high life accept its discipline joyfully and have a just pride in keeping themselves up to their ideal. A life of

Reality of high life as a fact in nature.

health, of sound morality, of disinterested intellectual activity, of freedom from petty cares, *is* higher than a life of disease, and vice, and stupidity, and sordid anxiety. I maintain that it is right and wise in a nation to set before itself the highest attainable ideal of human life as the existence of the complete gentleman, and that an envious democracy, instead of rendering a service to itself, does exactly the contrary when it cannot endure and will not tolerate the presence of high-spirited gentlemen in the State. There are things in this world that it is right to hate, that we are the better for hating with all our hearts; and one of the things that I hate most, and with most reason, is the narrow class-spirit when it sets itself against the great interests of mankind. It is odious in the narrow-minded, pompous, selfish, pitiless aristocrat who thinks that the sons of the people were made by Almighty God to be his lacqueys and their daughters to be his mistresses; it is odious also, to the full as odious, in the narrow-minded, envious democrat who cannot bear to see any elegance of living, or grace of manner, or culture of mind above the range of his own capacity or his own purse.

Value of a high ideal.

Odiousness of class-spirit in aristocrats:

and also in democrats.

Let me recommend to your consideration the following words, written by one young nobleman about another young nobleman, and reminding us, as we much need to be reminded, that life may be not only honest and vigorous, but also noble and beautiful. Robert Lytton says of Julian Fane—

"He was, I think, the most graceful and accomplished gentleman of the generation he adorned, and by this generation, at least, appropriate place should be reserved for the memory of a man in whose character the most universal sympathy with all the

Julian Fane.

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Artistry of life.

intellectual culture of his age was united to a refinement of social form, and a perfection of personal grace, which, in spite of all its intellectual culture, the age is sadly in want of. There is an artistry of life as well as of literature, and the perfect knighthood of Sidney is no less precious to the world than the genius of Spenser."

Envious disposition of some democracies

It is just this "perfect knighthood" that an envious democracy sneers at and puts down. I do not say that all democracies are necessarily envious, but they often are so, especially when they first assert themselves, and whilst in that temper they are very willing to ostracise gentlemen, or compel them to adopt bad manners. I have some hopes that the democracies of the future may be taught by authors and artists to appreciate natural gentlemanhood; but so far as we know them hitherto they seem intolerant of dignity, and disposed to attribute it (very unjustly) to individual self-conceit. The personages most popular in democratic countries are often remarkably deficient in dignity, and liked the better for the want of it, whilst if on the positive side they can display occasional coarseness they become more popular still. Then I should say, that although democratic feeling raises the lower classes and increases their self-respect, which is indeed one of the greatest imaginable benefits to a nation, it has a tendency to fix one uniform type of behaviour and of thought as the sole type in conformity with what is accepted for "common sense," and that type can scarcely, in the nature of things, be a very elevated one. I have been much struck, in France, by the prevalence of what may be not inaccurately defined as the commercial traveller type, even in classes where you would scarcely expect to meet with it. One little descriptive anecdote will illustrate what I mean. Having

Intolerance of dignity.

Uniformity of type in democratic manners.

Anecdote of a French officer.

been invited to a stag-hunt in the Côte d'Or, I sat down to *déjeuner* with the sportsmen in a good country-house or château (it was an old place with four towers), and in the midst of the meal in came a man smoking a cigar. After a bow to the ladies he declined to eat anything, and took a chair a little apart, but just opposite me. He resumed his hat and went on smoking with a *sans-gêne* that rather surprised me under the circumstances. He put one arm on the side-board: the hand hung down, and I perceived that it was dirty (so was the shirt), and that the nails had edges of ebony. On his chin there was a black stubble of two days' growth. He talked very loudly, and his dress and manners were exactly those of a bagman just arrived at his inn. Who and what could the man be? I learned afterwards that he had begun life as a distinguished pupil of the *École Polytechnique*, that since then he had distinguished himself as an officer of artillery and had won the Legion of Honour on the field of battle, that he belonged to one of the principal families in the neighbourhood, and had nearly 2,000*l.* a year from landed property. Now, it may be a good thing for the roughs at the bottom of the social scale to level up to the bagman-ideal, but it does seem rather a pity (does it not?) that a born gentleman of more than common bravery and ability should level *down* to it. And it is here that lies the principal objection to democracy from the point of view of culture, that its notion of life and manners is a uniform notion, not admitting much variety of classes, and not allowing the high development of graceful and accomplished humanity in any class which an aristocracy does at least encourage in one class, though it may be numerically a small class. I have not forgotten what Saint-Simon and La Bruyère have

His dress and manners.

Reflections suggested by them.

PART VIII. LETTER II.

testified about the ignorance of the old noblesse. Saint-Simon said that they were fit for nothing but fighting, and only qualified for promotion even in the army by seniority; that the rest of their time was passed in "the most deadly uselessness, the consequence of their indolence and distaste for all instruction." I am sure that my modern artillery captain, notwithstanding his bad manners, *knew* more than any of his forefathers; but where was his "perfect knighthood?" And we easily forget "how much talent runs into manners," as Emerson says. From the artistic and poetical point of view, behaviour is an expression of knowledge and taste and feeling in combination, as clear and legible as literature or painting, so that when the behaviour is coarse and unbecoming we know that the perceptions cannot be delicate, whatever may have been learned at school. When Dr. Arnold travelled on the Continent, nothing struck him more than the absence of gentlemen. "We see no gentlemen anywhere," he writes from Italy. From France he writes: "Again I have been struck with the total absence of all gentlemen, and of all persons of the education and feelings of gentlemen." Now, although Dr. Arnold spoke merely from the experience of a tourist, and was perhaps not quite competent to judge of Frenchmen and Italians otherwise than from externals, still there was much truth in his observation. It was not quite absolutely true. I have known two or three Italian officers, and one Savoyard nobleman, and a Frenchman here and there, who were as perfect gentlemen as any to be found in England, but they were isolated like poets, and were in fact poets in behaviour and self-discipline. The plain truth is, that there is no distinct class in France maintaining good

Talent in manners.

Absence of gentlemen in France and Italy.

Dr. Arnold.

Exceptions.

manners as a tradition common to all its members; and this seems to be the inevitable defect of a democracy. It may be observed, further, that language itself is defiled by the vulgarity of the popular taste; that expressions are used continually, even by the upper middle class, which it is impossible to print, and which are too grossly indecent to find a place even in the dictionaries; that respectable men, having become insensible to the meaning of these expressions from hearing them used without intention, employ them constantly from habit, as they decorate their speech with oaths, whilst only purists refrain from them altogether.

Degradation of language

An aristocracy may be very narrow and intolerant, but it can only exclude from its own pale, whereas when a democracy is intolerant it excludes from all human intercourse. Our own aristocracy, as a class, rejects Dissenters, and artists, and men of science, but they flourish quite happily outside of it. Now try to picture to yourself a great democracy having the same prejudices, who could get out of the democracy? All aristocracies are intolerant with reference, I will not say to religion, but, more accurately, with reference to the outward forms of religion, and yet this aristocratic intolerance has not prevented the development of religious liberty, because the lower classes were not strictly bound by the customs of the nobility and gentry. The unwritten law appears to be that members of an aristocracy shall conform either to what is actually the State Church or to what has been the State Church at some former period of the national history. Although England is a Protestant country, an English gentleman does not lose caste when he joins the Roman Catholic communion; but he loses caste when he becomes a Dissenter. The influence of

Aristocratic intolerance.

PART VIII. LETTER II

this caste-law in keeping the upper classes within the Churches of England and of Rome has no doubt been very considerable, but its influence on the nation generally has been incomparably less considerable than that of some equally decided social rule in the entire mind of a democracy. Had this rule of conformity to the religion of the State been that of the English democracy, religious liberty would have been extinguished throughout the length and breadth of England. I say that the customs and convictions of a democracy are more dangerous to intellectual liberty than those of an aristocracy, because, in matters of custom, the gentry rule only within their own park-palings, whereas the people, when power resides with them, rule wherever the breezes blow. A democracy that dislikes refinement and good manners can drive men of culture into solitude, and make morbid hermits of the very persons who ought to be the lights and leaders of humanity. It can cut short the traditions of good-breeding, the traditions of polite learning, the traditions of thoughtful leisure, and reduce the various national types of character to one type, that of the *commis-voyageur*. All men of refined sentiment in modern France lament the want of elevation in the *bourgeoisie*. They read nothing, they learn nothing, they think of nothing but money and the satisfaction of their appetites. There are exceptions, of course, but the tone of the class is mean and low, and devoid of natural dignity or noble aspiration. Their ignorance passes belief, and is accompanied by an absolute self-satisfaction. "La fin de la bourgeoisie," says an eminent French author, "commence parcequ'elle a les sentiments de la populace. Je ne vois pas qu'elle lise d'autres journaux, qu'elle se régale d'une musique différente, qu'elle ait des plaisirs

Dangers of intolerance in a democracy.

Want of elevation in the French bourgeoisie.

Quotation from Flaubert.

plus élevés. Chez l'une comme chez l'autre, c'est le même amour de l'argent, le même respect du fait accompli, le même besoin d'idoles pour les détruire, la même haine de toute supériorité, le même esprit de dénigrement, la même crasse ignorance!" M. Renan also complains that during the Second Empire the country sank deeper and deeper into vulgarity, forgetting its past history and its noble enthusiasms. "Talk to the peasant, to the socialist of the International, of France, of her past history, of her genius, he will not understand you. Military honour seems madness to him; the taste for great things, the glory of the mind, are vain dreams; money spent for art and science is money thrown away foolishly. Such is the provincial spirit." And if this is the provincial spirit, what is the spirit of the metropolitan democracy? Is it not clearly known to us by its acts? It had the opportunity, under the Commune, of showing the world how tenderly it cared for the monuments of national history, how anxious it was for the preservation of noble architecture, of great libraries, of pictures that can never be replaced. Whatever may have been our illusions about the character of the Parisian democracy, we know it very accurately now. To say that it is brutal would be an inadequate use of language, for the brutes are only indifferent to history and civilization, not hostile to them. So far as it is possible for us to understand the temper of that democracy, it appears to cherish an active and intense hatred for every conceivable kind of superiority, and an instinctive eagerness to abolish the past; or, as that is not possible, since the past will always *have been* in spite of it, then at least to efface all visible memorials and destroy the bequests of all preceding generations. If anyone had affirmed, before the fall of Louis Napoleon,

Quotation from M. Renan.

The provincial spirit.

The Parisian democracy.

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that the democratic spirit was capable of setting fire to the Louvre and the national archives and libraries, of deliberately planning the destruction of all those magnificent edifices, ecclesiastical and civil, which were the glory of France and the delight of Europe, we should have attributed such an assertion to the exaggerations of reactionary fears. But since the year 1870 we do not speculate about the democratic temper in its intensest expression; we have seen it at work, and we know it. We know that every beautiful building, every precious manuscript and picture, has to be protected against the noxious swarm of Communards as a sea-jetty against the Pholas and the Teredo.

The extreme democratic temper.

Compare this temper with that of a Marquis of Hertford, a Duke of Devonshire, a Duc de Luynes! True guardians of the means of culture, these men have given splendid hospitality to the great authors and artists of past times, by keeping their works for the future with tender and reverent care. Nor has this function of high stewardship ever been more nobly exercised than it is to-day by that true knight and gentleman, Sir Richard Wallace. Think of the difference between this great-hearted guardian of priceless treasures, keeping them for the people, for civilization, and a base-spirited Communard setting fire to the library of the Louvre.

True stewardship.

The ultra-democratic spirit is hostile to culture, from its hatred of all delicate and romantic sentiment, from its scorn of the tenderer and finer feelings of our nature, and especially from its brutish incapacity to comprehend the needs of the higher life. If it had its way we should be compelled by public opinion to cast all the records of our ancestors, and the shields they wore in battle, into the foul waters of an eternal Lethe. The intolerance of the

Ultra-democratic hostility to culture.

sentiment of birth, that noble sentiment which has animated so many hearts with heroism, and urged them to deeds of honour, associated as it is with a cynical disbelief in the existence of female virtue,[1] is one of the commonest signs of this evil spirit of detraction. It is closely connected with an ungrateful indifference towards all that our forefathers have done to make civilization possible for us. Now, although the intellectual spirit studies the past critically, and does not accept history as a legend is accepted by the credulous, still the intellectual spirit has a deep respect for all that is noble in the past, and would preserve the record of it for ever. Can you not imagine, have you not actually seen, the heir of some ancient house who shares to the full the culture and aspirations of the age in which we live, and who nevertheless preserves, with pious reverence, the towers his forefathers built on the ancestral earth, and the oaks they planted, and the shields that were carved on the tombs where the knights and their ladies rest? Be sure that a right understanding of the present is compatible with a right and reverent understanding of the past, and that, although we may closely question history and tradition, no longer with child-like faith, still the spirit of true culture would never efface their vestiges. It was not Michelet, not Renan, not Hugo, who set fire to the Palace of Justice and imperilled the Sainte-Chapelle.

Ingratitude to ancestors.

Intellectual respect for the past.

And yet, notwithstanding all these vices and excesses of the democratic spirit, notwithstanding the meanness of the middle classes and the violence of the mob, there

[1] The association between the two is this. If you believe that you are descended from a distinguished ancestor, you are simple enough to believe in his wife's fidelity.

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Aristocracies think too much of persons and positions.

is one all-powerful reason why our best hopes for the liberal culture of the intellect are centred in the democratic idea. The reason is, that aristocracies think too much of persons and positions to weigh facts and opinions justly. In an aristocratic society it is thought unbecoming to state your views in their full force in the presence of any social superior. If you state them at all you must soften them to suit the occasion, or you will be a sinner against good-breeding. Observe how timid and acquiescent the ordinary Englishman becomes in the presence of a lord. No right-minded person likes to be thought impudent, and where the tone of society refers everything to position, you are considered impudent when you forget your station. But what has my station to do with the truths the intellect perceives, that lie entirely outside of me? From the intellectual point of view, it is a necessary virtue to forget your station, to forget yourself entirely, and to think of the subject only, in a manner perfectly disinterested. Anonymous journalism was a device to escape from that continual reference to the rank and fortune of the speaker which is an inveterate habit in all aristocratic communities. A young man without title or estate knows that he would not be listened to in the presence of his social superiors, so he holds his tongue in society and relieves himself by an article in the *Times*. The anonymous newspapers and reviews are a necessity in an aristocratic community, for they are the only means of attracting attention to facts and opinions without attracting it to yourself, the only way of escaping the personal question, "Who and what are you, that you venture to speak so plainly, and where is your stake in the country?"

Forgetfulness of station.

Anonymous journalism.

The democratic idea, by its theoretic equality amongst

men, affords an almost complete relief from this impediment to intellectual conversation. The theory of equality is good, because it negatives the interference of rank and wealth in matters that appertain to the intellect or to the moral sense. It may even go one step farther with advantage, and ignore intellectual authority also. The perfection of the intellectual spirit is the entire forgetfulness of persons, in the application of the whole power of the mind to things, and phenomena, and ideas. Not to mind whether the speaker is of noble or humble birth, rich or poor; this indeed is much, but we ought to attain a like indifference to the authority of the most splendid reputation. "Every great advance in natural knowledge," says Professor Huxley, "has involved the absolute rejection of authority, the cherishing of the keenest scepticism, the annihilation of the spirit of blind faith; and the most ardent votary of science holds his firmest convictions, not because the men he most venerates hold them, not because their verity is testified by portents and wonders, but because his experience teaches him that whenever he chooses to bring these convictions into contact with their primary source, Nature—whenever he thinks fit to test them by appealing to experiment and to observation—Nature will confirm them."

Forgetfulness of persons.

Rejection of authority.

PART IX.

SOCIETY AND SOLITUDE.

LETTER I.

TO A LADY WHO DOUBTED THE REALITY OF INTELLECTUAL FRIENDSHIPS.

PART IX. LETTER I.

That intellectual friendships are in their nature temporary, when there is no basis of feeling to support them—Their freshness soon disappears—Danger of satiety—Temporary acquaintances —Succession in friendships—Free communication of intellectual results—Friendships between ripe and immature men—Rembrandt and Hoogstraten—Tradition transmitted through these friendships.

Temporary nature of intellectual friendships.

I HEARTILY agree with you so far as this, that intellectual relations will not sustain friendship for very long, unless there is also some basis of feeling to sustain it. And still there is a certain reality in the friendships of the intellect whilst they last, and they are remembered gratefully for their profit when in the course of nature they have ceased. We may wisely contract them, and blamelessly dissolve them when the occasion that created them has gone by. They are like business partnerships, contracted from motives of interest, and requiring integrity above all things, with mutual respect and consideration,

Nature and results of intellectual friendships.

yet not necessarily either affection or the semblance of it. Since the motive of the intellectual existence is the desire to ascertain and communicate truth, a sort of positive and negative electricity immediately establishes itself between those who want to know and those who desire to communicate their knowledge; and the connection is mutually agreeable until these two desires are satisfied. When this happens, the connection naturally ceases; but the memory of it usually leaves a permanent feeling of good-will, and a permanent disposition to render services of the same order. This, in brief, is the whole philosophy of the subject; but it may be observed farther, that the purely intellectual intercourse which often goes by the name of friendship affords excellent opportunities for the formation of real friendship, since it cannot be long continued without revealing much of the whole nature of the associates.

Exhaustion of what is accessible to us in other minds.

We do not easily exhaust the mind of another, but we easily exhaust what is accessible to us in his mind; and when we have done this, the first benefit of intercourse is at an end. Then comes a feeling of dulness and disappointment, which is full of the bitterest discouragement to the inexperienced. In maturer life we are so well prepared for this that it discourages us no longer. We know beforehand that the freshness of the mind that was new to us will rapidly wear away, that we shall soon assimilate the fragment of it which is all that ever can be made our own, so we enjoy the freshness whilst it lasts, and are even careful of it as a fruiterer is of the bloom upon his grapes and plums. It may seem a hard and worldly thing to say, but it appears to me that a wise man might limit his intercourse with others before there was any danger of satiety, as it is wisdom in eating to rise

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from table with an appetite. Certainly, if the friends of our intellect live near enough for us to anticipate no permanent separation by mere distance, if we may expect to meet them frequently, to have many opportunities for a more thorough and searching exploration of their minds, it is a wise policy not to exhaust them all at once. With the chance acquaintances we make in travelling, the case is altogether different; and this is, no doubt, the reason why men are so astonishingly communicative when they never expect to see each other any more. You feel an intense curiosity about some temporary companion; you make many guesses about him; and to induce him to tell you as much as possible in the short time you are likely to be together, you win his confidence by a frankness that would perhaps considerably surprise your nearest neighbours and relations. This is due to the shortness of the opportunity; but with people who live in the same place, you will proceed much more deliberately.

Temporary acquaintances.

Whoever would remain regularly provided with intellectual friends, ought to arrange a succession of friendships, as gardeners do with peas and strawberries, so that, whilst some are fully ripe, others should be ripening to replace them. This doctrine sounds like blasphemy against friendship; but it is not intended to apply to the sacred friendship of the heart, which ought to be permanent like marriage, only to the friendship of the head, which is of the utmost utility to culture, yet in its nature temporary. I know a distinguished Englishman who is quite remarkable for the talent with which he arranges his intellectual friendships, so as never to be dependent on anyone, but always sure of the intercourse he needs, both now and in the future. He will never be isolated,

Succession of friendships

A distinguished Englishman.

never without some fresh and living interest in humanity. It may seem to you that there is a lamentable want of faith in this; and I grant at once that a system of this kind does presuppose the extinction of the boyish belief in the permanence of human relations; still, it indicates a large-minded confidence in the value of human intercourse, an enjoyment of the present, a hope for the future, and a right appreciation of the past.

Willingness of the cultivated to communicate results.

Nothing is more beautiful in the intellectual life than the willingness of all cultivated people—unless they happen to be accidentally soured by circumstances that have made them wretched—to communicate to others the results of all their toil. It is true that they apparently lose nothing by the process, and that a rich man who gives some portion of his material wealth exercises a greater self-denial; still, when you consider that men of culture, in teaching others, abandon something of their relative superiority, and often voluntarily incur the sacrifice of what is most precious to them, namely, their time, I think you will admit that their readiness in this kind of generosity is one of the finest characteristics of highly-developed humanity.

Friendships between old and young.

Of all intellectual friendships, none are so beautiful as those which subsist between old and ripe men and their younger brethren in science, or literature, or art. It is by these private friendships, even more than by public performance, that the tradition of sound thinking and great doing is perpetuated from age to age.

Rembrandt and Hoogstraten.

Hoogstraten, who was a pupil of Rembrandt, asked him many questions, which the great master answered thus:—"Try to put well in practice what you already know; in so doing you will, in good time, discover the hidden things which you now inquire about." That answer of Rembrandt's is typical

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of the maturest teaching. How truly friendly it is; how full of encouragement; how kind in its admission that the younger artist *did* already know something worth putting into practice; and yet, at the same time, how judicious in its reserve! Few of us have been so exceptionally unfortunate as not to find, in our own age, some experienced friend who has helped us by precious counsel, never to be forgotten. We cannot render it in kind; but perhaps in the fulness of time it may become our noblest duty to aid another as we have ourselves been aided, and to transmit to him an invaluable treasure, the tradition of the intellectual life.

The tradition of kindness.

LETTER II.

LETTER II.

TO A YOUNG GENTLEMAN WHO LIVED MUCH IN FASHIONABLE SOCIETY.

Certain dangers to the intellectual life—Difficult to resist the influences of society—Gilding—Fashionable education—Affectations of knowledge—Not easy to ascertain what people really know—Value of real knowledge diminished—Some good effects of affectations—Their bad effect on workers—Skill in amusements.

THE kind of life which you have been leading for the last three or four years will always be valuable to you as a past experience, but if the intellectual ambition you confessed to me is quite serious, I would venture to suggest that there are certain dangers in the continuation of your present existence if altogether uninterrupted. Pray do not suspect me of any narrow prejudice against human intercourse, or of any wish to make a hermit of you before your time, but believe that the few observations I have to make are grounded simply on the

desire that your career should be entirely satisfactory to your own maturer judgment, when you will look back upon it after many years.

An intellectual man may go into general society quite safely if only he can resist its influence upon his serious work; but such resistance is difficult in maturity and impossible in youth.

Society not based upon the deepest realities.

The sort of influence most to be dreaded is this. Society is, and must be, based upon appearances, and not upon the deepest realities. It requires some degree of reality to produce the appearance, but not a substantial reality. Gilding is the perfect type of what Society requires. A certain quantity of gold is necessary for the work of the gilder, but a very small quantity, and skill in applying the metal so as to cover a large surface is of greater consequence than the weight of the metal itself. The mind of a fashionable person is a carefully gilded mind.

Gilding.

Fashionable education.

Consider fashionable education. Society imperatively requires an outside knowledge of many things; not permitting the frank confession of ignorance, whilst it is yet satisfied with a degree of knowledge differing only from avowed ignorance in permitting you to be less sincere. All young ladies, whether gifted by nature with any musical talent or not, are compelled to say that they have learned to play upon the piano; all young gentlemen are compelled to affect to know Latin. In the same way the public opinion of Society compels its members to pretend to know and appreciate the masterpieces of literature and art. There is, in truth, so much compulsion of this kind that it is not easy to ascertain what people do really know and care about until they admit you into their confidence.

PART IX LETTER II.

Depreciating effect of fashionable ideas

The inevitable effect of these affectations is to diminish the value, in Society, of genuine knowledge and accomplishment of all kinds. I know a man who is a Latin scholar; he is one of the few moderns who have really learned Latin; but in fashionable society this brings him no distinction, because we are all supposed to know Latin, and the true scholar, when he appears, cannot be distinguished from the multitude of fashionable pretenders. I know another man who can draw; there are not many men, even amongst artists, who can draw soundly; yet in fashionable society he does not get the serious sort of respect which he deserves, because fashionable people believe that drawing is an accomplishment generally attainable by young ladies and communicable by governesses. I have no wish to insinuate that Society is wrong in requiring a certain pretence to education in various subjects, and a certain affectation of interest in masterpieces, for these pretences and affectations do serve to deliver it from the darkness of a quite absolute ignorance. A society of fashionable people who think it necessary to be able to talk superficially about the labours of men really belonging to the intellectual class, is always sure to be much better informed than a Society such as that of the French peasantry, for example, where nobody is expected to know anything. It is well for Society itself that it should profess a deep respect for classical learning, for the great modern poets and painters, for scientific discoverers, even though the majority of its members do not seriously care about them. The pretension itself requires a certain degree of knowledge, as gilding requires a certain quantity of gold.

Utility of fashionable affectations.

Their bad effects.

The evil effects of these affectations may be summed up in a sentence. They diminish the apparent value of

the realities which they imitate, and they tend to weaken our enthusiasm for those great realities, and our ardour in the pursuit of them. The impression which fashionable society produces upon a student who has strength enough to resist it, is a painful sense of isolation in his earnest work. If he goes back to the work with courage undiminished, he still clearly realizes—what it would be better for him not to realize quite so clearly—the uselessness of going beyond fashionable standards, if he aims at social success. And there is still another thing to be said which concerns you just now very particularly. Whoever leads the intellectual life in earnest is sure on some points to fail in strict obedience to the exigencies of fashionable life, so that, if fashionable successes are still dear to him, he will be constantly tempted to make some such reflections as the following :—"Here am I, giving years and years of labour to a pursuit which brings no external reward, when half as much work would keep me abreast of the society I live with, in everything it really cares about. I know quite well all that my learning is costing me. Other men outshine me easily in social pleasures and accomplishments. My skill at billiards and on the moors is evidently declining, and I cannot ride or drive so well as fellows who do very little else. In fact, I am becoming an old muff, and all I have to show on the other side is a degree of scholarship which only six men in Europe can appreciate, and a speciality in natural science in which my little discoveries are sure to be either anticipated or left behind."

Isolation in earnest work.

A consequence of earnestness.

The truth is, that to succeed well in fashionable society the higher intellectual attainments are not so useful as distinguished skill in those amusements which are the real business of the fashionable world. The three things

Skill in amusements

PART IX. LETTER III.

so most frequently in the choice of pursuits, and in the proportionate importance which the individual student will (in his own case) assign to his pursuits. The regulations of fashionable life have fixed, at the least temporarily, the degree of time and attention which a fashionable person may devote to this thing or that. The intellectual spirit ignores these regulations, and devotes its possessor, or more accurately its *possessed*, to the intellectual speciality for which he has most natural aptitude, often leaving him ignorant of what fashion has decided to be essential. After living the intellectual life for several years he will know too much of one thing and too little of some other things to be in conformity with the fashionable ideal. For example, the fashionable ideal of a gentleman requires classical scholarship, but it is so difficult for artists and men of science to be classical scholars also that in this respect they are likely to fall short. I knew a man who became unfashionable because he had a genius for mechanics. He was always about steam-engines, and, though a gentleman by birth, associated from choice with men who understood the science that chiefly interested him, of which all fashionable people were so profoundly ignorant that he habitually kept out of their way. He, on his part, neglected scholarship and literature and all that "artistry of life," as Mr. Robert Lytton calls it, in which fashionable society excels. Men are frequently driven into unfashionable existence by the very force and vigour of their own intellectual gifts, and sometimes by external circumstances, apparently most trifling, yet of infinite influence on human destiny. There is a good instance of this in a letter from Ampère to his young wife, that "Julie" who was lost to him so soon. "I went to dine

Intellectual specialities.

A mechanical genius.

yesterday at Madame Beauregard's with hands blackened by a harmless drug which stains the skin for three or four days. She declared that it looked like manure, and ended by leaving the table, saying that she would dine when I was at a distance. I promised not to return there before my hands were white. Of course I shall never enter the house again."

Anecdote of Ampère.

Here we have an instance of a man of science who has temporarily disqualified himself for polite society by an experiment in the pursuit of knowledge. What do you think of the vulgarity of Madame Beauregard? To me it appears the perfect type of that pre-occupation about appearances which blinds the genteel vulgar to the true nobility of life. Were not Ampère's stained hands nobler than many white ones? It is not necessary for every intellectual worker to blacken his fingers with chemicals, but a kind of rust very frequently comes over him which ought to be as readily forgiven, yet rarely *is* forgiven. "In his relations with the world," writes the biographer of Ampère, "the authority of superiority disappeared. To this the course of years brought no alternative. Ampère become celebrated, laden with honourable distinctions, the great Ampère! outside the speculations of the intellect, was hesitating and timid again, disquieted and troubled, and more disposed to accord his confidence to others than to himself."

Genteel vulgarity.

Intellectual pursuits did not qualify Ampère, they do not qualify anyone, for success in fashionable society. To succeed in the world you ought to be *of* the world, so as to share the things which interest it without too wide a deviation from the prevalent current of your thoughts. Its passing interests, its temporary customs, its transient phases of sentiment and opinion, ought to be

On being of the world.

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for the moment your own interests, your own feelings and opinions. A mind absorbed as Ampère's was in the contemplation and elucidation of the unchangeable laws of nature, is too much fixed upon the permanent to adapt itself naturally to these ever-varying estimates. He did not easily speak the world's lighter language, he could not move with its mobility. Such men forget even what they eat and what they put on ; Ampère's young wife was in constant anxiety, whilst the pair were separated by the severity of their fate, as to the sufficiency of his diet and the decency of his appearance. One day she writes to him to mind not to go out in his shabby old coat, and in the same letter she entreats him to purchase a bottle of wine, so that when he took no milk or broth he would find it, and when it was all drunk she tells him to buy another bottle. Afterwards she asks him whether he makes a good fire, and if he has any chairs in his room. In another letter she inquires if his bed is comfortable, and in another she tells him to mind about his acids, for he has burnt holes in his blue stockings. Again, she begs him to try to have a passably decent appearance, because that will give pleasure to his poor wife. He answers, to tranquillize her, that he does not burn his things now, and that he makes chemical experiments only in his old breeches with his grey coat and his waistcoat of greenish velvet. But one day he is forced to confess that she must send him new trousers if he is to appear before MM. Delambre and Villars. He "does not know what to do," his best breeches still smell of turpentine, and, having wished to put on trousers to go to the Society of Emulation, he saw the hole which Barrat fancied he had mended become bigger than ever, so that it showed

Madame Ampère's anxiety about her husband

Ampère's clothes.

the piece of different cloth which he had sewn under it. He adds that his wife will be afraid that he will spoil his "*beau pantalon*," but he promises to send it back to her as clean as when he received it. How different is all this from that watchful care about externals which marks the man of fashion! Ampère was quite a young man then, still almost a bridegroom, yet he is already so absorbed in the intellectual life as to forget appearances utterly, except when Julie, with feminine watchfulness, writes to recall them to his mind. I am not defending or advocating this carelessness. It is better to be neat and tidy than to go in holes and patches; but I desire to insist upon the radical difference between the fashionable spirit and the intellectual spirit. And this difference, which shows itself in these external things, is not less evident in the clothing or preparation of the mind. Ampère's intellect, great and noble as it was, could scarcely be considered more suitable for *le grand monde* than the breeches that smelt of turpentine, or the trousers made ragged by aquafortis.

Ampère unsuited for the "grand monde."

A splendid contrast, as to tailoring, was our own dear Oliver Goldsmith, who displayed himself in those wonderful velvet coats and satin small-clothes from Mr. Filby's, which are more famous than the finest garments ever worn by prince or peer. Who does not remember that bloom-coloured coat which the ablest painters have studiously immortalized, made by John Filby, at the Harrow, in Water Lane (best advertised of tailors!), and that charming blue velvet suit, which Mr. Filby was never paid for? Surely a poet so splendid was fit for the career of fashion! No, Oliver Goldsmith's velvet and lace were the expression of a deep and painful sense of personal unfitness. They were the fine frame which is

Goldsmith's fine clothes

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Johnson's neglect of fashion.

intended to pass off an awkward and imperfect picture. There was a quieter dignity in Johnson's threadbare sleeves. Johnson, the most influential though not the most elegant intellect of his time, is grander in his neglect of fashion than Goldsmith in his ruinous subservience. And if it were permitted to me to speak of two or three great geniuses who adorn the age in which we ourselves are living, I might add that they seem to follow the example of the author of "Rasselas" rather than that of Mr. Filby's illustrious customer. They remind me of a good old squire who, from a fine sentiment of duty, permitted the village artist to do his worst upon him, and incurred thereby this withering observation from his metropolitan tailor: "You are *covered*, sir, but you are *not* dressed!"

Living men of genius.

LETTER IV.

LETTER IV.

TO A YOUNG GENTLEMAN WHO LIVED MUCH IN FASHIONABLE SOCIETY.

Test of professions—Mobility of fashionable taste—Practical service of an external deference to culture—Incompatibility between fashionable and intellectual lives—What each has to offer.

YOUR polite, almost diplomatic answer to my letter about fashionable society may be not unfairly concentrated into some such paragraph as the following:—

"What grounds have I for concluding that the professed tastes and opinions of Society are in any degree insincere? May not society be quite sincere in the preferences which it professes, and are not the preferences themselves almost always creditable to the good taste

and really advanced culture of the Society which I suspect of a certain degree of affectation?"

This is the sense of your letter, and in reply to it I give you a simple but sure test. Is the professed opinion carried out in practice, when there are fair opportunities for practice?

Test of professions.

Let us go so far as to examine a particular instance. Your friends profess to appreciate classical literature. Do they read it? Or, on the other hand, do they confine themselves to believing that it is a good thing for other people to read it?

When I was a schoolboy, people told me that the classical authors of antiquity were eminently useful, and indeed absolutely necessary to the culture of the human mind, but I perceived that they did not read them. So I have heard many people express great respect for art and science, only they did not go so far as to master any department of art or science.

If you will apply this test to the professions of what is especially called fashionable society, it is probable that you will arrive at the conclusions of the minority, which I have endeavoured to express. You will find that the fashionable world remains very contentedly outside the true working intellectual life, and does not really share either its labours or its aspirations.

Mobility of fashionable taste.

Another kind of evidence, which tells in the same direction, is the mobility of fashionable taste. At one time some studies are fashionable, at another time these are neglected and others have taken their place. You wil not find this fickleness in the true intellectual world, which steadily pursues all its various studies, and keeps them well abreast, century after century.

If I insist upon this distinction with reference to you,

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do not accuse me of hostility even to fashion itself. Fashion is one of the great Divine institutions of human society, and the best philosophy rebels against none of the authorities that be, but studies and endeavours to explain them. The external deference which Society yields to culture is practically of great service, although (I repeat the epithet) it is *external*. The sort of good effect is in the intellectual sphere what the good effect of a general religious profession is in the moral sphere. All fashionable society goes to church. Fashionable religion differs from the religion of Peter and Paul as fashionable science differs from that of Humboldt and Arago, yet, notwithstanding this difference, the profession of religion is useful to Society as some restraint, at least during one day out of seven, upon its inveterate tendency to live exclusively for its amusement. And if any soul happens to come into existence in the fashionable world which has the genuine religious nature, that nature has a chance of developing itself, and of finding ready to hand certain customs which are favourable to its well-being. So it is, though in quite a different direction, with the esteem which Society professes for intellectual pursuits. It is an esteem in great part merely nominal, as fashionable Christianity is nominal, and still it helps and favours the early development of the genuine faculty where it exists. It is certainly a great help to us that fashionable society, which has such a tremendous, such an almost irresistible power for good or evil, does not openly discourage our pursuits, but on the contrary regards them with great external deference and respect. The recognition which Society has given to artists has been wanting in frankness and in promptitude, though even in this case much may be said

Good effect of external deference to culture.

Nominal esteem for great pursuits.

to excuse a sort of hesitation rather than refusal which was attributable to the strangeness and novelty of the artistic caste in England; but Society has for more than a generation professed a respect for literature and erudition which has helped those two branches of culture more effectually than great subsidies of money. The exact truth seems to be that Society is sincere in approving our devotion to these pursuits, but is not yet sufficiently interested in them to appreciate them otherwise than from the outside, just as a father and mother applaud their boys for reading Thucydides, yet do not read him themselves, either in the original or in a translation.

Incompatibility between the fashionable and the intellectual lives.

All that I care to insist upon is that there is a degree of incompatibility between the fashionable and the intellectual lives which makes it necessary, at a certain time, to choose one or the other as our own. There is no hostility, there need not be any uncharitable feeling on one side or the other, but there must be a resolute choice between the two. If you decide for the intellectual life, you will incur a definite loss to set against your gain. Your existence may have calmer and profounder satisfactions, but it will be less amusing, and even in an appreciable degree less *human;* less in harmony, I mean, with the common instincts and feelings of humanity. For the fashionable world, although decorated by habits of expense, has enjoyment for its object, and arrives at enjoyment by those methods which the experience of generations has proved to be most efficacious. Variety of amusement, frequent change of scenery and society, healthy exercise, pleasant occupation of the mind without fatigue—these things do indeed make existence agreeable to human nature, and the science of living agreeably is better understood in the fashionable society of England than by laborious students

Enjoyment the object of the world

PART IX. LETTER IV.

and *savans*. The life led by that society is the true heaven of the natural man, who likes to have frequent feasts and a hearty appetite, who enjoys the varying spectacle of wealth, and splendour, and pleasure, who loves to watch, from the Olympus of his personal ease, the curious results of labour in which he takes no part, the interesting ingenuity of the toiling world below. In exchange for these varied pleasures of the spectator the intellectual life can offer you but one satisfaction, for all its promises are reducible simply to this, that you shall come at last, after infinite labour, into contact with some great *reality* —that you shall know, and do, in such sort that you will feel yourself on firm ground and be recognized—probably not much applauded, but yet recognized—as a fellow-labourer by other knowers and doers. Before you come to this, most of your present accomplishments will be abandoned by yourself as unsatisfactory and insufficient, but one or two of them will be turned to better account, and will give you after many years a tranquil self-respect, and, what is still rarer and better, a very deep and earnest reverence for the greatness which is above you. Severed from the vanities of the Illusory, you will live with the realities of knowledge, as one who has quitted the painted scenery of the theatre to listen by the eternal ocean or gaze at the granite hills.

What the intellectual life has to offer.

LETTER V.

TO A YOUNG GENTLEMAN WHO KEPT ENTIRELY OUT OF COMPANY.

That Society which is frivolous in the mass contains individuals who are not frivolous—A piece of the author's early experience—Those who keep out of Society miss opportunities—People talk about what they have in common—That we ought to be tolerant of dulness—The loss to Society if superior men all held aloof—Utility of the gifted in general society—They ought not to submit to expulsion.

Society frivolous in the mass.

I WILLINGLY concede all that you say against fashionable society as a whole. It is, as you say, frivolous, bent on amusement, incapable of attention sufficiently prolonged to grasp any serious subject, and liable both to confusion and inaccuracy in the ideas which it hastily forms or easily receives. You do right, assuredly, not to let it waste your most valuable hours, but I believe also that you do wrong in keeping out of it altogether.

Superiority of individual members of society.

The society which seems so frivolous in masses contains individual members who, if you knew them better, would be able and willing to render you the most efficient intellectual help, and you miss this help by restricting yourself exclusively to books. Nothing can replace the conversation of living men and women; not even the richest literature can replace it.

A company of Englishmen.

Many years ago I was thrown by accident amongst a certain society of Englishmen who, when they were all together, never talked about anything worth talking about. Their general conversations were absolutely empty and null, and I concluded, as young men so easily conclude, that those twenty or thirty gentlemen

PART IX. LETTER V

Clever and interesting members of a dull company

had not half a dozen ideas amongst them. A little reflection might have reminded me that my own talk was no better than theirs, and consequently that there might be others in the company who also knew more and thought more than they expressed. I found out, by accident, after a while, that some of these men had more than common culture in various directions; one or two had travelled far, and brought home the results of much observation; one or two had read largely, and with profit; more than one had studied a science; five or six had seen a great deal of the world. It was a youthful mistake to conclude that, because their general conversation was very dull, the men were dull individually. The general conversations of English society *are* dull; it is a national characteristic. But the men themselves are individually often very well informed, and quite capable of imparting their information to a single interested listener. The art is to be that listener. Englishmen have the greatest dread of producing themselves in the semi-publicity of a general conversation, because they fear that their special topics may not be cared for by some of the persons present; but if you can get one of them into a quiet corner by himself, and humour his shyness with sufficient delicacy and tact, he will disburden his mind at last; and experience a relief in so doing.

English dread of a general conversation

What is missed by keeping out of society

By keeping out of society altogether you miss these precious opportunities. The wise course is to mix as much with the world as may be possible without withdrawing too much time from your serious studies, but not to expect anything valuable from the general talk, which is nothing but a neutral medium in which intelligences float and move as yachts do in sea-water, and for

which they ought not to be held individually responsible. The talk of Society answers its purpose if it simply permits many different people to come together without clashing, and the purpose of its conventions is the avoidance of collision. In England the small talk is heavy, like water; in France it is light as air; in both countries it is a medium and no more.

Conversation runs chiefly on amusements.

Society talks, by preference, about amusements; it does so because when people meet for recreation they wish to relieve their minds from serious cares, and also for the practical reason that Society must talk about what its members have in common, and their amusements are more in common than their work. As M. Thiers recommended the republican form of government in France on the ground that it was the form which divided his countrymen least, so a polite and highly civilized society chooses for the subject of general conversation the topic which is least likely to separate the different people who are present. It almost always happens that the best topic having this recommendation is some species of amusement; since amusements are easily learnt outside the business of life, and we are all initiated into them in youth.

That we ought to be tolerant of dulness.

For these reasons I think that we ought to be extremely tolerant of the dulness or frivolity which may seem to prevail in any numerous company, and not to conclude too hastily that the members of it are in any degree more dull or frivolous than ourselves. It is unfortunate, certainly, that the art of general conversation is not so successfully cultivated as it might be, and there are reasons for believing that our posterity will surpass us in this respect, because as culture increases the spirit of toleration increases with it, so that the great questions of politics

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Use of general conversation.

and religion, in which all are interested, may be discussed more safely than they could be at the present day, by persons of different ways of thinking. But even the sort of general conversation we have now, poor as it may seem, still sufficiently serves as a medium for human intercourse, and permits us to meet on a common ground where we may select at leisure the agreeable or instructive friends that our higher intellect needs, and without whom the intellectual life is one of the ghastliest of solitudes.

And now permit me to add a few observations on another aspect of this subject, which is not without its importance.

Let us suppose that everyone of rather more than ordinary capacity and culture were to act as you yourself are acting, and withdraw entirely from general society. Let us leave out of consideration for the present the loss to their private culture which would be the consequence of missing every opportunity for forming new intellectual friendships. Let us consider, this time, what would be the consequence to Society itself.

Effect upon Society if all superior people withdrew from it.

If all the cultivated men were withdrawn from it, the general tone of Society would inevitably descend much lower even than it is at present; it would sink so low that the whole national intellect would undergo a sure and inevitable deterioration. It is plainly the duty of men situated as you are, who have been endowed by nature with superior faculties, and who have enlarged them by the acquisition of knowledge, to preserve Society by their presence from an evil so surely prolific of bad consequences. If Society is less narrow, and selfish, and intolerant, and apathetic than it used to be, it is because they who are the salt of the earth have not disdained to mix with its grosser and earthier elements. All the improve-

ment in public sentiment, and the advancement in general knowledge which have marked the course of recent generations, are to be attributed to the wholesome influence of men who could think and feel, and who steadily exercised, often quite obscurely, yet not the less usefully in their time and place, the subtle but powerful attraction of the greater mind over the less. Instead of complaining that people are ignorant and frivolous, we ought to go amongst them and lead them to the higher life. "I know not how it is," said one in a dull circle to a more gifted friend who entered it occasionally, "when we are left to ourselves we are all lamentably stupid, but whenever you are kind enough to come amongst us we all talk very much better, and of things that are well worth talking about." The gifted man is always welcome, if only he will stoop to conquer, and forget himself to give light and heat to others. The low Philistinism of many a provincial town is due mainly to the shy reserve of the one or two superior men who fancy that they cannot amalgamate with the common intellect of the place.

Attraction of superior minds.

Effect of a single gifted person.

Bad consequences of reserve.

Not only would I advocate a little patient condescension, but even something of the sturdier temper which will not be driven out. Are the Philistines to have all the talk to themselves for ever; are they to rehearse their stupid old platitudes without the least fear of contradiction? How long, O Lord, how long? Let us resolve that even in general society they shall not eternally have things their own way. Somebody ought to have the courage to enlighten them even at their own tables, and in the protecting presence of their admiring wives and daughters.

Philistines ought not to have things all their own way.

PART IX. LETTER VI.

LETTER VI.

TO A FRIEND WHO KINDLY WARNED THE AUTHOR OF THE BAD EFFECTS OF SOLITUDE.

Væ solis—Society and solitude alike necessary—The use of each—In solitude we know ourselves—Montaigne as a book-buyer—Compensations of solitude—Description of one who loved and sought it—How men are driven into solitude—Cultivated people in the provinces—Use of solitude as a protection for rare and delicate natures—Shelley's dislike to general society—Wordsworth and Turner—Sir Isaac Newton's repugnance to society—Auguste Comte—His systematic isolation and unshakable firmness of purpose—Milton and Bunyan—The solitude which is really injurious—Painters and authors—An ideal division of life.

Væ solis.

YOU cry to me *Væ solis!* and the cry seems not the less loud and stirring that it comes in the folds of a letter. Just at first it quite startled and alarmed me, and made me strangely dissatisfied with my life and work; but farther reflection has been gradually reconciling me ever since, and now I feel cheerful again, and in a humour to answer you.

Woe unto him that is alone! This has been often said, but the studious recluse may answer, *Woe unto him that is never alone and cannot bear to be alone!*

Both society and solitude are necessary

We need society, and we need solitude also, as we need summer and winter, day and night, exercise and rest. I thank heaven for a thousand pleasant and profitable conversations with acquaintances and friends; I thank heaven also, and not less gratefully, for thousands of sweet hours that have passed in solitary thought or labour, under the silent stars.

Society is necessary to give us our share and place in the collective life of humanity, but solitude is necessary

to the maintenance of the individual life. Society is to the individual what travel and commerce are to a nation; whilst solitude represents the home life of the nation, during which it develops its especial originality and genius.

The life of the perfect hermit, and that of those persons who feel themselves nothing individually, and have no existence but what they receive from others, are alike imperfect lives. The perfect life is like that of a ship of war which has its own place in the fleet and can share in its strength and discipline, but can also go forth alone in the solitude of the infinite sea. We ought to belong to Society, to have our place in it, and yet to be capable of a complete individual existence outside of it.

The perfect life.

Which of the two is the grander, the ship in the disciplined fleet, arranged in order of battle, or the ship alone in the tempest, a thousand miles from land? The truest grandeur of the ship is neither in one nor the other, but in the capacity for both. What would that captain merit who either had not seamanship enough to work under the eye of the admiral, or else had not sufficient knowledge of navigation to be trusted out of the range of signals?

I value society for the abundance of ideas that it brings before us, like carriages in a frequented street; but I value solitude for sincerity and peace, and for the better understanding of the thoughts that are truly ours. Only in solitude do we learn our inmost nature and its needs. He who has lived for some great space of existence apart from the tumult of the world, has discovered the vanity of the things for which he has no natural aptitude or gift—their *relative* vanity, I mean, their uselessness to himself, personally; and at the same time he has learned

Uses of solitude.

PART IX. LETTER VI.

what is truly precious and good for him. Surely this is knowledge of inestimable value to a man: surely it is a great thing for anyone in the bewildering confusion of distracting toils and pleasures to have found out the labour that he is most fit for and the pleasures that satisfy him best. Society so encourages us in affectations that it scarcely leaves us a chance of knowing our own minds; but in solitude this knowledge comes of itself, and delivers us from innumerable vanities.

Montaigne as a book-buyer.

Montaigne tells us that at one time he bought books from ostentation, but that afterwards he bought only such books as he wanted for his private reading. In the first of these conditions of mind we may observe the influence of society; in the second the effect of solitude. The man of the world does not consult his own intellectual needs, but considers the eyes of his visitors; the solitary student takes his literature as a lonely traveller takes food when he is hungry, without reference to the ordered courses of public hospitality.

It is a traditional habit of mankind to see only the disadvantages of solitude, without considering its compensations; but there are great compensations, some of the greatest being negative. The lonely man is lord of his own hours and of his own purse; his days are long and unbroken, he escapes from every form of ostentation, and may live quite simply and sincerely in great calm breadths of leisure. I knew one who passed his summers in the heart of a vast forest, in a common thatched cottage with furniture of common deal, and for this retreat he quitted very gladly a rich fine house in the city. He wore nothing but old clothes, read only a few old books, without the least regard to the opinions of the learned, and did not take in a newspaper. On the wall of his

Sincerity and leisure.

A recluse.

habitation he inscribed with a piece of charcoal a quotation from De Sénancour to this effect: "In the world a man lives in his own age; in solitude, in all the ages." I observed in him the effects of a lonely life, and he greatly aided my observations by frankly communicating his experiences. That solitude had become inexpressibly dear to him, but he admitted one evil consequence of it, which was an increasing unfitness for ordinary society, though he cherished a few tried friendships, and was grateful to those who loved him and could enter into his humour. He had acquired a horror of towns and crowds, not from nervousness, but because he felt imprisoned and impeded in his thinking, which needed the depths of the forest, the venerable trees, the communication with primæval nature, from which he drew a mysterious yet necessary nourishment for the peculiar activity of his mind. I found that his case answered very exactly to the sentence he quoted from De Sénancour; he lived less in his own age than others do, but he had a fine compensation in a strangely vivid understanding of other ages. Like De Sénancour, he had a strong sense of the transitoriness of what is transitory, and a passionate preference for all that the human mind conceives to be relatively or absolutely permanent. This trait was very observable in his talk about the peoples of antiquity, and in the delight he took in dwelling rather upon everything which they had in common with ourselves than on those differences which are more obvious to the modern spirit. His temper was grave and earnest, but unfailingly cheerful, and entirely free from any tendency to bitterness. The habits of his life would have been most unfavourable to the development of a man of business, of a statesman, of a leader in practical enterprise, but they were certainly

Experience of a recluse.

Compensations.

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not unfavourable to the growth of a tranquil and comprehensive intellect, capable of "just judgment and high-hearted patriotism." He had not the spirit of the newspapers, he did not live intensely in the present, but he had the spirit which has animated great poets, and saints, and sages, and far-seeing teachers of humanity. Not in vain had he lived alone with Nature, not in vain had he watched in solemn twilights and witnessed many a dawn. There is, there *is* a strength that comes to us in solitude from that shadowy, awful Presence that frivolous crowds repel!

The strength that comes in solitude.

Solitude may be and is sometimes deliberately accepted or chosen, but far more frequently men are driven into it by Nature and by Fate. They go into solitude to escape the sense of isolation which is always most intolerable when there are many voices round us in loud dissonance with our sincerest thought. It is a great error to encourage in young people the love of noble culture in the hope that it may lead them more into what is called good society. High culture always isolates, always drives men out of their class and makes it more difficult for them to share naturally and easily the common class-life around them. They seek the few companions who can understand them, and when these are not to be had within any traversable distance, they sit and work alone. Very possibly too, in some instances, a superior culture may compel the possessor of it to hold opinions too far in advance of the opinions prevalent around him to be patiently listened to or tolerated, and then he must either disguise them, which is always highly distasteful to a man of honour, or else submit to be treated as an enemy to human welfare. Cultivated people who live in London (their true home) need never condemn themselves to

Men are driven into solitude.

Culture isolates.

solitude from this cause, but in the provinces there are many places where it is not easy for them to live sociably without a degree of reserve that is more wearisome than solitude itself. And however much pains you take to keep your culture well in the background, it always makes you rather an object of suspicion to people who have no culture. They perceive that you are reserved, they know that very much of what passes in your mind is a mystery to them, and this feeling makes them uneasy in your presence, even afraid of you, and not indisposed to find a compensation for this uncomfortable feeling in sarcasms behind your back. Unless you are gifted with a truly extraordinary power of conciliating goodwill, you are not likely to get on happily, for long together, with people who feel themselves your inferiors. The very utmost skill and caution will hardly avail to hide all your modes of thought. Something of your higher philosophy will escape in an unguarded moment, and give offence because it will seem foolish or incomprehensible to your audience. There is no safety for you but in a timely withdrawal, either to a society that is prepared to understand you, or else to a solitude where your intellectual superiorities will neither be a cause of irritation to others nor of vexation to yourself.

That cultivated people inspire distrust.

Like all our instincts, the instinct of solitude has its especial purpose, which appears to be the protection of rare and delicate natures from the commonplace world around them. Though recluses are considered by men of the world to be doomed to inevitable incompetence, the fact is that many of them have reached the highest distinction in intellectual pursuits. If Shelley had not disliked general society as he did, the originality of his own living and thinking would have been less complete;

The instinct of solitude. Its use

PART IX. LETTER VI

the influences of mediocre people, who, of course, are always in the majority, would have silently but surely operated to the destruction of that unequalled and personal delicacy of imagination to which we owe what is inimitable in his poetry. In the last year of his life, he said to Trelawny of Mary, his second wife, "She can't bear solitude, nor I society—the quick coupled with the dead." Here is a piteous prayer of his to be delivered from a party that he dreaded: "Mary says she will have a party! There are English singers here, the Sinclairs, and she will ask them, and everyone she or you know. Oh the horror! For pity go to Mary and intercede for me! I will submit to any other species of torture than that of being bored to death by idle ladies and gentlemen." Again, he writes to Mary: "My greatest delight would be utterly to desert all human society. I would retire with you and our child to a solitary island in the sea; would build a boat, and shut upon my retreat the flood-gates of the world. I would read no reviews and talk with no authors. If I dared trust my imagination it would tell me that there are one or two chosen companions beside yourself whom I should desire. But to this I would not listen; where two or three are gathered together, the devil is among them." At Marlow he knew little of his neighbours. "I am not wretch enough," he said, "to tolerate an acquaintance." Wordsworth and Turner, if less systematic in their isolation, were still solitary workers, and much of the peculiar force and originality of their performance is due to their independence of the people about them. Painters are especial sufferers from the visits of talkative people who know little or nothing of the art they talk about, and yet who have quite influence enough to disturb the painter's mind

Shelley's dread of Society.

Shelley's passion for retirement.

Wordsworth and Turner.

Painters.

by proving to him that his noblest thoughts are surest to be misunderstood. Men of science, too, find solitude favourable to their peculiar work, because it permits the concentration of their powers during long periods of time. Newton had a great repugnance to society, and even to notoriety—a feeling which is different, and in men of genius more rare. No one can doubt, however, that Newton's great intellectual achievements were due in some measure to this peculiarity of his temper, which permitted him to ripen them in the sustained tranquillity necessary to difficult investigations. Auguste Comte isolated himself not only from preference but on system, and whatever may have been the defects of his remarkable mind, and the weakness of its ultimate decay, it is certain that his amazing command over vast masses of heterogeneous material would have been incompatible with any participation in the passing interests of the world. Nothing in intellectual history has ever exceeded the unshakable firmness of purpose with which he dedicated his whole being to the elaboration of the Positive philosophy. He sacrificed everything to it—position, time, health, and all the amusements and opportunities of society. He found that commonplace acquaintances disturbed his work and interfered with his mastery of it, so he resolutely renounced them. Others have done great things in isolation that was not of their own choosing, yet none the less fruitful for them and for mankind. It was not when Milton saw most of the world, but in the forced retirement of a man who had lost health and eyesight, and whose party was hopelessly defeated, that he composed the "Paradise Lost." It was during tedious years of imprisonment that Bunyan wrote his immortal allegory. Many a genius has owed his best

Newton's repugnance to society.

Self-isolation of Auguste Comte.

Milton.

Bunyan.

PART IX LETTER VI.

opportunities to poverty, because poverty had happily excluded him from society, and so preserved him from time-devouring exigencies and frivolities.

The solitude which is really injurious is the severance from all who are capable of understanding us. Painters say that they cannot work effectively for very long together when separated from the society of artists, and that they must return to London, or Paris, or Rome, to avoid an oppressive feeling of discouragement which paralyses their productive energy. Authors are more fortunate, because all cultivated people are society for them; yet even authors lose strength and agility of thought when too long deprived of a genial intellectual atmosphere. In the country you meet with cultivated individuals; but we need more than this, we need those general conversations in which every speaker is worth listening to. The life most favourable to culture would have its times of open and equal intercourse with the best minds, and also its periods of retreat. My ideal would be a house in London, not far from one or two houses that are so full of light and warmth that it is a liberal education to have entered them, and a solitary tower on some island of the Hebrides, with no companions but the sea-gulls and the thundering surges of the Atlantic. One such island I know well, and it is before my mind's eye, clear as a picture, whilst I am writing. It stands in the very entrance of a fine salt-water loch, rising above two hundred feet out of the water and setting its granite front steep against the western ocean. When the evenings are clear you can see Staffa and Iona like blue clouds between you and the sunset; and on your left, close at hand, the granite hills of Mull, with Ulva to the right across the narrow

Discouragements of isolation.

Country life.

An ideal division of time.

A solitude in the Hebrides.

strait. It was the dream of my youth to build a tower there, with three or four little rooms in it, and walls as strong as a lighthouse. There have been more foolish dreams, and there have been less competent teachers than the tempests that would have roused me and the calms that would have brought me peace. If any serious thought, if any noble inspiration might have been hoped for, surely it would have been there, where only the clouds and waves were transient, but the ocean before me, and the stars above, and the mountains on either hand, were emblems and evidences of eternity.

NOTE.—There is a passage in Scott's novel, "The Pirate," which illustrates what has been said in this letter about the necessity for concealing superior culture in the presence of less intellectual companions, and I quote it the more willingly that Scott was so remarkably free from any morbid aversion to society, and so capable of taking a sincere interest in every human being.

Cleveland is speaking to Minna :—

Quotation from Sir Walter Scott.

"I thought over my former story, and saw that seeming more brave, skilful, and enterprising than others had gained me command and respect, and that seeming more gently nurtured and more civilized than they had made them envy and hate me as a being of another species. *I bargained with myself then, that since I could not lay aside my superiority of intellect and education, I would do my best to disguise, and to sink, in the rude seaman, all appearance of better feeling and better accomplishments.*"

A similar policy is often quite as necessary in the society of landsmen.

PART X.

INTELLECTUAL HYGIENICS.

LETTER I.

TO A YOUNG AUTHOR WHILST HE WAS WRITING HIS FIRST BOOK.

PART X. LETTER I.

Mr. Galton's advice to young travellers—That we ought to interest ourselves in the *progress* of a journey—The same rule applicable in intellectual things—Woman in the cabin of a canal boat—Working hastily for temporary purposes—Fevered eagerness to get work done—Beginners have rarely acquired firm intellectual habits—Knowing the range of our own powers—The coolness of accomplished artists—Advice given by Ingres—Balzac's method of work—Scott, Horace Vernet, John Phillip—Decided workers are deliberate workers.

Mr. Galton's advice to travellers.

I READ the other day, in Galton's "Art of Travel," a little bit which concerns you and all of us, but I made the extract in my commonplace-book for your benefit rather than my own, because the truth it contains has been "borne in upon me" by my own experience, so that what Mr. Galton says did not give me a new conviction, but only confirmed me in an old one. He is speaking to explorers who have not done so much in that way as he has himself, and though the subject of his

advice is the conduct of an exploring party (in the wilds of Australia, for example) the advice itself is equally useful if taken metaphorically, and applied to the conduct of intellectual labours and explorations of all kinds.

"Interest yourself," says Mr. Galton, "chiefly in the progress of your journey, and do not look forward to its end with eagerness. It is better to think of a return to civilization, not as an end to hardship and a haven from ill, but as a thing to be regretted, and as a close to an adventurous and pleasant life. In this way, risking less, you will insensibly creep on, making connections, and learning the capabilities of the country as you advance, which will be found invaluable in the case of a hurried or a disastrous return. And thus, when some months have passed by, you will look back with surprise on the great distance travelled over; for if you average only three miles a day, at the end of the year you will have advanced 1,000, which is a very considerable exploration. The fable of the hare and the tortoise seems expressly intended for travellers over wide and unknown tracts."

Interest in the progress of work.

Yes, we ought to interest ourselves chiefly in the progress of our work, and not to look forward to its end with eagerness. That eagerness of which Mr. Galton speaks has spoiled many a piece of work besides a geographical exploration, and it not only spoils work, but it does worse, it spoils life also. How am I to enjoy this year as I ought, if I am continually wishing it were over? A truly intellectual philosophy must begin by recognizing the fact that the intellectual paths are infinitely long, that there will always be new horizons behind the horizon that is before us, and that we must accept a gradual advance as the law of our intellectual life. It is our business to move forwards, but we ought to do so

PART X. LETTER I.

A bargeman's wife.

without any greater feeling of hurry than that which affects the most stationary of minds. Not a bad example for us is a bargeman's wife in a canal-boat. She moves; movement is the law of her life; yet she is as tranquil in her little cabin as any goodwife on shore, brewing her tea and preparing her buttered toast without ever thinking about getting to the end of her journey. For if that voyage were ended, another would always succeed to it, and another! In striking contrast to the unhurried bargeman's wife in her cabin is an irritable Frenchman in the corner of a diligence, looking at his watch every half-hour, and wishing that the dust and rattle were over, and he were in his own easy-chair at home. Those who really lead the intellectual life, and have embraced it for better and for worse, are like the bargeman's wife; but those who live the life from time to time only, for some special purpose, wishing to be rid of it as soon as that purpose is accomplished, are like the sufferer in the purgatory of the diligence. Is there indeed really any true intellectual life at all when every hour of labour is spoiled by a feverish eagerness to be at the end of the projected task? You cannot take a bit out of another man's life and live it, without having lived the previous years that led up to it, without having also the assured hopes for the years that lie beyond. The attempt is constantly made by amateurs of all kinds, and by men of temporary purposes, and it always fails. The amateur says when he awakes on some fine summer morning, and draws up his blind, and looks out on the dewy fields: "Ah, the world of nature is beautiful to-day; what if I were to lead the life of an artist?" And after breakfast he seeks up his old box of watercolour and his block-book, and stool, and white umbrella, and what not, and

Feverish eagerness.

Temporary purposes.

sallies forth, and fixes himself on the edge of the forest or the banks of the amber stream. The day that he passes there looks like an artist's day, yet it is not. It has not been preceded by the three or four thousand days which ought to have led up to it; it is not strong in the assured sense of present skill, in the calm knowledge that the hours will bear good fruit. So the chances are that there will be some hurry, and fretfulness, and impatience, under the shadow of that white parasol, and also that when the day is over there will be a disappointment. You cannot put an artist's day into the life of anyone but an artist.

Causes of impatience.

Our impatiences come mainly, I think, from an amateurish doubt about our own capacity, which is accompanied by a fevered eagerness to see the work done, because we are tormented both by hopes and fears so long as it is in progress. We have fears that it may not turn out as it ought to do, and we have at the same time hopes for its success. Both these causes produce eagerness, and deprive us of the tranquillity which distinguishes the thorough workman, and which is necessary to thoroughness in the work itself. Now please observe that I am not advising you to set aside these hopes and fears by an effort of the will; when you have them they are the inevitable result of your state of culture, and the will can no more get rid of them than it can get rid of an organic disease. When you have a limited amount of power and of culture, and are not quite clear in your own mind as to where the limits lie, it is natural on the one hand that you should fear the insufficiency of what you possess, and on the other that in more sanguine moments you should indulge in hopes which are only extravagant because your powers have not yet been accu-

Doubts of our own capacity.

Fears and hopes

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LETTER I

rately measured. You will alternate between fear and hope, according to the temporary predominance of saddening or cheerful ideas, but both these feelings will urge you to complete the work in hand, that you may see your own powers reflected in it, and measure them more exactly. This is the main cause of the eagerness of young authors, and the reason why they often launch work upon the sea of publicity which is sure to go immediately to the bottom, from the unworkmanlike haste with which it has been put together. But beyond this there is another cause, which is, that beginners in literature have rarely acquired firm intellectual habits, that they do not yet lead the tranquil intellectual life, so that such a piece of work as the composition of a book keeps them in an unwholesome state of excitement. When you feel this coming upon you, pray remember Mr. Galton's wise traveller in unknown tracts, or the bargeman's wife in the canal-boat.

Eagerness of young authors.

Unwholesome excitement

Amongst the many advantages of experience, one of the most valuable is that we come to know the range of our own powers, and if we are wise we keep contentedly within them. This relieves us from the malady of eagerness; we know pretty accurately beforehand what our work will be when it is done, and therefore we are not in a hurry to see it accomplished. The coolness of old hands in all departments of labour is due in part to the cooling of the temperament by age, but it is due even more to the fulness of acquired experience, for we do not find middle-aged men so cool in situations where they feel themselves incompetent. The conduct of the most experienced painters in the management of their work is a good example of this masterly coolness, because we can see them painting in their studios, whereas we cannot so

Coolness of old hands

easily see or so justly estimate the coolness of scientific or literary workmen. A painter of great experience will have, usually, several pictures at a time upon his easels, and pass an hour upon one, or an hour upon the other, simply as the state of the pigment invites him, without ever being tempted to risk anything by hurrying a process. The ugly preparatory daubing which irritates the impatience of the beginner does not disturb *his* equanimity; he has laid it with a view to the long-foreseen result, and it satisfies him temporarily as the right thing for the time being. If you know what is the right thing for the time being, and always do it, you are sure of the calm of the thorough workman. All his touches, except the very last touch on each work, are touches of preparation, leading gradually up to his result. Ingress used to counsel his pupils to *sketch always*, to sketch upon and within the first sketch till the picture came right in the end; and this was strictly Balzac's method in literature. The literary and artistic labours of these two men did not proceed so much upon the principle of travelling as upon that of cultivation. They took an idea in the rough, as a settler takes a tract from wild nature, and then they went over it repeatedly, each time pushing the cultivation of it a little farther. Scott, Horace Vernet, John Philip, and many others, have worked rather on the principle of travelling, passing over the ground once, and leaving it, never coming back again to correct the mistakes of yesterday. Both methods of work require deliberation, but the latter needs it in the supreme degree. All very decided workers, men who did not correct, have been at the same time very deliberate workers—rapid, in the sense of accomplishing much in the course of the year, or the life, but cautious and slow and observant whilst

Method of an experienced painter.

Ingress on Balzac.

Scott and others.

Decided workers.

PART X. LETTER I.

they actually laboured, thinking out very carefully every sentence before they wrote it, every touch of paint before they laid it.

LETTER II.

LETTER II.

TO A STUDENT IN THE FIRST ARDOUR OF INTELLECTUAL AMBITION.

The first freshness—Why should it not be preserved?—The dulness of the intellectual—Fictions and false promises—*Ennui* in work itself—Durer's engraving of Melancholy—Scott about Dryden—Byron, Shelley, Wordsworth—Humboldt, Cuvier, Goethe—Tennyson's "Maud"—Preventives of *ennui*—Hard study for limited times—The *ennui* of jaded faculties.

I HAVE been thinking about you frequently of late, and the burden or refrain of my thoughts has been "What a blessing he has in that first freshness, if only he could keep it!" But now I am beginning more hopefully to ask myself, "Why should he not keep it?"

It would be an experiment worth trying, so to order your intellectual life, that however stony and thorny your path might be, however difficult and arduous, it should at all events never be dull; or, to express what I mean more accurately, that you yourself should never feel the depressing influences of dulness during the years when they are most to be dreaded. I want you to live steadily and happily in your intellectual labours, even to the natural close of existence, and my best wish for you is that you may escape a long and miserable malady which brain-workers very commonly suffer from when the first dreams of youth have been disappointed—a malady in which the intellectual desires are feeble, the intellectual

Depressing effects of dulness.

hopes are few; whose victim, if he has still resolution enough to learn anything, acquires without satisfaction, and, if he has courage to create, has neither pride nor pleasure in his creations.

If I were to sing the praises of knowledge as they have been so often sung by louder harps than mine, I might avoid so dreary a theme. It is easy to pretend to believe that the intellectual life is always sure to be interesting and delightful, but the truth is that, either from an unwise arrangement of their work, or from mental or physical causes which we will investigate to some extent before we have done with the subject, many men whose occupations are reputed to be amongst the most interesting have suffered terribly from *ennui*, and that not during a week or two at a time, but for consecutive years and years.

Fiction and truth.

Ennui.

There is a class of books written with the praiseworthy intention of stimulating young men to intellectual labour, in which this danger of the intellectual life is systematically ignored. It is assumed in these books that the satisfactions of intellectual labour are certain; that although it may not always, or often, result in outward and material prosperity, its inward joys will never fail. Promises of this kind cannot safely be made to anyone. The satisfactions of intellectual riches are not more sure than the satisfactions of material riches; the feeling of dull indifference which often so mysteriously clouds the life of the rich man in the midst of the most elaborate contrivances for his pleasure and amusement, has its exact counterpart in the lives of men who are rich in the best treasures of the mind, and who have infinite intellectual resources. However brilliant your ability, however brave and persistent your industry, however vast

That intellectual satisfactions are not sure.

PART X. LETTER II.

Ennui.

Dürer's "Melencolia."

your knowledge, there is always this dreadful possibility of *ennui*. People tell you that work is a specific against it, but many a man has worked steadily and earnestly, and suffered terribly from *ennui* all the time that he was working, although the labour was of his own choice, the labour that he loved best, and for which Nature evidently intended him. The poets, from Solomon downwards, have all of them, so far as I know, given utterance in one page or another of their writings to this feeling of dreary dissatisfaction, and Albert Dürer, in his "Melencolia," illustrated it. It is plain that the robust female figure which has exercised the ingenuity of so many commentators is not melancholy either from weakness of the body or vacancy of the mind. She is strong and she is learned; yet, though the plumes of her wings are mighty, she sits heavily and listlessly, brooding amidst the implements of suspended labour, on the shore of a waveless sea. The truth is that Dürer engraved the melancholy that he himself only too intimately knew. This is not the dulness of the ignorant and incapable, whose minds are a blank because they have no ideas, whose hands are listless for want of an occupation; it is the sadness of the most learned, the most intelligent, the most industrious; the weary misery of those who are rich in the attainments of culture, who have the keys of the chambers of knowledge, and wings to bear them to the heaven of the ideal. If you counsel this "Melencolia" to work that she may be merry, she will answer that she knows the uses of labour and its vanity, and the precise amount of profit that a man hath of all his labour which he taketh under the sun. All things are full of labour, she will tell you; and in much wisdom is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.

Can we escape this brooding melancholy of the great workers—has any truly intellectual person escaped it ever? The question can never be answered with perfect certainty, because we can never quite accurately know the whole truth about the life of another. I have known several men of action, almost entirely devoid of intellectual culture, who enjoyed an unbroken flow of animal energy, and were clearly free from the melancholy of Dürer; but I never intimately knew a really cultivated person who had not suffered from it more or less, and the greatest sufferers were the most conscientious thinkers and students. Amongst the illustrious dead, it may be very safely answered that any poet who has described it has written from his own experience—a transient experience it may be, yet his own. When Walter Scott, *à-propos* of Dryden, spoke of "the apparently causeless fluctuation of spirits incident to one doomed to labour incessantly in the feverish exercise of the imagination," and of that "sinking of spirit which follows violent mental exertion," is it not evident that his kindly understanding of Dryden's case came from the sympathy of a fellow-labourer who knew by his own experience the gloomier and more depressing passages of the imaginative life? It would be prudent perhaps to omit the mention of Byron, because some may attribute his sadness to his immorality; and if I spoke of Shelley, they might answer that he was "sad because he was impious;" but the truth is, that quite independently of conduct, and even of belief, it was scarcely possible for natures so highly imaginative as these two, and so ethereally intellectual as one of the two, to escape those clouds of gloom which darken the intellectual life. Wordsworth was not immoral, Wordsworth was not unorthodox, yet he could

Prevalence of melancholy amongst cultivated people.

Scott and Dryden.

Byron.

Shelley.

Wordsworth.

PART X. LETTER II.

be as sad in his own sober way as Byron in the bitterness of his desolation, or Shelley in his tenderest wailing. The three men who seem to have been the least subject to the sadness of intellectual workers were Alexander Humboldt, Cuvier, and Goethe. Alexander Humboldt, so far as is known to us, lived always in a clear and cheerful daylight; his appetite for learning was both strong and regular; he embraced the intellectual life in his earliest manhood, and lived in it with an unhesitating singleness of purpose, to the limits of extreme old age. Cuvier was to the last a model student, of a temper at once most unflinching and most kind, happy in all his studies, happier still in his unequalled facility of mental self-direction. Goethe, as all know, lived a life of unflagging interest in each of the three great branches of intellectual labour. During the whole of his long life he was interested in literature, in which he was a master; he was interested in science, in which he was a discoverer, and in art, of which he was an ardent though not practically successful student. His intellectual activity ceased only on rare occasions of painful illness or overwhelming affliction; he does not seem to have asked himself ever whether knowledge was worth its cost; he was always ready to pay the appointed price of toil. He had no infirmity of intellectual doubt; the powerful impulses from within assured him that knowledge was good for him, and he went to it urged by an unerring instinct, as a young salmon bred in the slime of a river seeks strength in the infinite sea. And yet, being a poet and a man of strong passions, Goethe did not altogether escape the green-sickness which afflicts the imaginative temperament, or he could never have written "Werther;" but he cured himself very

Humboldt.

Cuvier.

Goethe.

soon, and the author of "Werther" had no indulgence for Wertherism—indeed we are told that he grew ashamed of having written the book which inoculated the younger minds of Europe with that miserable disease. In our own time an illustrious poet has given in "Maud" a very perfect study of a young mind in a morbid condition, a mind having indeed the student-temper, but of a bad kind, that which comes not from the genuine love of study, but from sulky rage against the world.

Tennyson's "Maud."

> "Thanks, for the fiend best knows whether woman or man be the worse.
> *I will bury myself in my books*, and the Devil may pipe to his own."

This kind of self-burial in one's library does not come from the love of literature. The recluse will not speak to his neighbour, yet needs human intercourse of some kind, and seeks it in reading, urged by an inward necessity. He feels no gratitude towards the winners of knowledge; his morbid ill-nature depreciates the intellectual labourers:—

> "The man of science himself is fonder of glory and vain;
> An eye well-practised in nature, a spirit bounded and poor."

What is the life such a spirit will choose for itself? Despising alike the ignorant and the learned, the acuteness of the cultivated and the simplicity of the poor, in what form of activity or inaction will he seek what all men need, the harmony of a life well tuned?

> "Be mine a philosopher's life in the quiet woodland ways;
> Where, if I cannot be gay, let a passionless peace be my lot."

There are many different morbid states of the mind,

PART X. LETTER II.

The hero of "Maud."

and this of the hero of "Maud" is only one of them, but it is the commonest amongst intellectual or semi-intellectual young men. See how he has a little fit of momentary enthusiasm (all he is capable of) about a shell that suddenly and accidentally attracts his attention. How true to the morbid nature is that incident! Unable to pursue any large and systematic observation, the diseased mind is attracted to things suddenly and accidentally, sees them out of all proportion, and then falls into the inevitable fit of scornful peevishness.

> "What is it? A learned man
> Could give it a clumsy name:
> Let him name it who can."

Precautions and preventives.

The question which concerns the world is, how this condition of the mind may be avoided. The cure Mr. Tennyson suggested was war; but wars, though more frequent than is desirable, are not to be had always. And in your case, my friend, it is happily not a cure but a preventive that is needed. Let me recommend certain precautions which taken together are likely to keep you safe. Care for the physical health in the first place, for if there is a morbid mind the bodily organs are not doing their work as they ought to do. Next, for the mind itself, I would heartily recommend hard study, really hard study, taken very regularly but in very moderate quantity. The effect of it on the mind is as bracing as that of cold water on the body, but as you ought not to remain too long in the cold bath, so it is dangerous to study *hard* more than a short time every day. Do some work that is very difficult (such as reading some language that you have to puzzle out *à coups de dictionnaire*) two hours a day regularly, to brace

the fighting power of the intellect, but let the rest of the day's work be easier. Acquire especially, if you possibly can, the enviable faculty of getting entirely rid of your work in the intervals of it, and of taking a hearty interest in common things, in a garden, or stable, or dog-kennel, or farm. If the work pursues you—if what is called unconscious cerebration, which ought to go forward without your knowing it, becomes conscious cerebration, and bothers you, then you have been working beyond your cerebral strength, and you are not safe.

Signs of over-work.

An organization which was intended by Nature for the intellectual life cannot be healthy and happy without a certain degree of intellectual activity. Natures like those of Humboldt and Goethe need immense labours for their own felicity, smaller powers need less extensive labour. To all of us who have intellectual needs there is a certain supply of work necessary to perfect health. If we do less, we are in danger of that *ennui* which comes from want of intellectual exercise; if we do more, we may suffer from that other *ennui* which is due to the weariness of the jaded faculties, and this is the more terrible of the two.

Necessity for mental activity.

PART X.
LETTER III.

LETTER III.

TO AN INTELLECTUAL MAN WHO DESIRED AN OUTLET FOR HIS ENERGIES.

Dissatisfaction of the intellectual when they have not an extensive influence—A consideration suggested to the author by Mr. Matthew Arnold—Each individual mind a portion of the national mind, which must rise or decline with the minds of which it is composed—Influence of a townsman in his town—Household influence—Charities and condescendences of the highly cultivated—A suggestion of M. Taine—Conversation with inferiors—How to make it interesting—That we ought to be satisfied with humble results and small successes.

Dissatisfaction occasioned by the want of influence.

THERE is a very marked tendency amongst persons of culture to feel dissatisfied with themselves and their success in life when they do not exercise some direct and visible influence over a considerable portion of the public. To put the case in a more concrete form, it may be affirmed that if an intellectual young man does not exercise influence by literature, or by oratory, or by one of the most elevated forms of art, he is apt to think that his culture and intelligence are lost upon the world, and either to blame himself for being what he considers a failure, or else (and this is more common) to find fault with the world in general for not giving him a proper chance of making his abilities tell. The facilities for obtaining culture are now so many and great, and within the reach of so many well-to-do people, that hundreds of persons become really very clever in various ways who would have remained utterly uncultivated had they lived in any previous century. A few of these distinguish themselves in literature and other pursuits which bring

notoriety to the successful, but by far the greater number have to remain in positions of obscurity, often being clearly conscious that they have abilities and knowledge not much, if at all, inferior to the abilities and knowledge of some who have achieved distinction. The position of a clever man who remains obscure is, if he has ambition, rather trying to the moral fibre, but there are certain considerations which might help to give a direction to his energy and so procure him a sure relief, which reputation too frequently fails to provide.

Considerations suggested by Mr. Matthew Arnold.

The first consideration is one which was offered to me many years ago by Mr. Matthew Arnold, and which I can give, though from memory, very nearly in his own words. The multiplicity of things which make claim to the attention of the public is in these days such that it requires either uncommon strength of will or else the force of peculiar circumstances to make men follow any serious study to good result, and the great majority content themselves with the general enlightenment of the epoch, which they get from newspapers and reviews. Hence the efforts of the intellectual produce little effect, and it requires either extraordinary talent or extraordinary fanaticism to awaken the serious interest of any considerable number of readers. Yet, in spite of these discouragements, we ought to remember that our labours, if not applauded by others, may be of infinite value to ourselves, and also that beyond this gain to the individual, his culture is a gain to the nation, whether the nation formally recognizes it or not. For the intellectual life of a nation is the sum of the lives of all intellectual people belonging to it, and in this sense your culture is a gain to England, whether England counts you amongst her eminent sons, or leaves you for ever obscure. Is

The culture of the individual a national gain.

PART X. LETTER III.

Patriotism and self-respect.

it not a noble spectacle, a spectacle well worthy of a highly civilized country, when a private citizen, with an admirable combination of patriotism and self-respect, says to himself as he labours, "I know that in a country so great as England, where there are so many able men, all that I do can count for very little in public estimation, yet I will endeavour to store my mind with knowledge and make my judgment sure, in order that the national mind of England, of which my mind is a minute fraction, may be enlightened by so much, be it never so little"? I think the same noble feeling might animate a citizen with reference to his native town; I think a good townsman might say to himself, "Our folks are not much given to the cultivation of their minds, and they need a few to set them an example. I will be one of those few. I will work and think, in order that our town may not get into a state of perfect intellectual stagnation." But if the nation or the city were too vast to call forth any noble feeling of this kind, surely the family is little enough and near enough. Might not a man say, "I will go through a good deal of intellectual drudgery in order that my wife and children may unconsciously get the benefit of it; I will learn facts for them that they may be accurate, and get ideas for them that they may share with me a more elevated mental state; I will do something towards raising the tone of the whole household"?

Care for the town or the family.

Resistance.

The practical difficulty in all projects of this kind is that the household does not care to be intellectually elevated, and opposes the resistance of gravitation. The household has its natural intellectual level, and finds it as inevitably as water that is free. Cultivated men are surrounded in their homes by a group of persons, wife, children, servants, who, in their intercourse with one

Kitchens and drawing-rooms.

another, create the household tone. What is a single individual with his books against these combined and active influences? Is he to go and preach the gospel of the intellect in the kitchen? Will he venture to present intellectual conclusions in the drawing-room? The kitchen has a tone of its own which all our efforts cannot elevate, and the drawing-room has its own atmosphere, an atmosphere unfavourable to severe and manly thinking. You cannot make cooks intellectual, and you must not be didactic with ladies. Intellectual men always feel this difficulty, and most commonly keep their intellect very much to themselves, when they are at home. If they have not an outlet elsewhere, either in society or in literature, they grow morbid.

Charities of the highly cultivated.

Yet, although it is useless to attempt to elevate any human being above his own intellectual level unless he gradually climbs himself as a man ascends a mountain, there are nevertheless certain charities or condescendences of the highly cultivated which may be good for the lower intelligences that surround them, as the streams from the Alpine snows are good for the irrigation of the valleys, though the meadows which they water must for ever remain eight or ten thousand feet below them. And I believe that it would greatly add to the happiness of the intellectual portion of mankind if they could more systematically exercise these charities. It is quite clear that we can never effect by chance conversation that total change in the mental state which is gradually brought about by the slow processes of education; we cannot give to an intellect that has never been developed, and which has fixed itself in the undeveloped state, that power and activity which come only after years of labour; but we may be able on many occasions to offer the sort

PART X. LETTER III.

Services rendered by an intellectual lady.

of help which a gentleman offers to an old woman when he invites her to get up into the rumble behind his carriage. I knew an intellectual lady who lived habitually in the country, and I may say without fanciful exaggeration that the farmers' wives round about her were considerably superior to what in all probability they would have been without the advantage of her kindly and instructive conversation. She possessed the happy art of conveying the sort of knowledge which could be readily received by her hearers, and in a manner which made it agreeable to them, so that they drew ideas from her quite naturally, and her mind irrigated their minds, which would have remained permanently barren without that help and refreshment. It would be foolish to exaggerate the benefits of such intellectual charity as this, but it is well, on the other hand, not to undervalue it. Such an influence can never convey much solid instruction, but it may convey some of its results. It may produce a more thoughtful and reasonable condition of mind, it may preserve the ignorant from some of those preposterous theories and beliefs which so easily gain currency amongst them. Indirectly, it may have rather an important political influence, by disposing people to vote for the better sort of candidate. And the influence of such intellectual charity on the material well-being of the humbler classes, on their health and wealth, may be quite as considerable as that of the other and more common sort of charity which passes silver from hand to hand.

Value and utility of such services.

A suggestion of M. Taine's.

Shortly after the termination of the great Franco-German conflict, M. Taine suggested in the *Temps* that subscribers to the better sort of journals might do a good deal for the enlightenment of the humbler classes by

merely lending their newspapers in their neighbourhood. This was a good suggestion: the best newspapers are an important intellectual propaganda; they awaken an interest in the most various subjects, and supply not only information but a stimulus. The danger to persons of higher culture that the newspaper may absorb time which would else be devoted to more systematic study, does not exist in the classes for whose benefit M. Taine made his recommendation. The newspaper is their only secular reading, and without it they have no modern literature of any kind. In addition to the praiseworthy habit of lending good newspapers, an intellectual man who lives in the country might adopt the practice of conversing with his neighbours about everything in which they could be induced to take an interest, giving them some notion of what goes on in the classes which are intellectually active, some idea of such discoveries and projects as an untutored mind may partially understand. For example, there is the great tunnel under the Mont Cenis, and there is the projected tunnel beneath the Channel, and there is the cutting of the Isthmus of Suez. A peasant can comprehend the greatness of these remarkable conceptions when they are properly explained to him, and he will often feel a lively gratitude for information of that kind. We ought to remember what a slow and painful operation reading is to the uneducated. Merely to read the native tongue is to them a labour so irksome that they are apt to lose the sense of a paragraph in seeking for that of a sentence or an expression. As they would rather speak than have to write, so they prefer hearing to reading, and they get much more good from it, because they can ask a question when the matter has not been made clear to them.

Lending newspaper

Talk with neighbours

Reading painful to the uneducated.

PART X. LETTER III. — — *Things which interest intellectual inferiors.*

One of the best ways of interesting and instructing your intellectual inferiors is to give them an account of your travels. All people like to hear a traveller tell his own tale, and whilst he is telling it he may slip in a good deal of information about many things, and much sound doctrine. Accounts of foreign countries, even when you have not seen them personally, nearly always awaken a lively interest, especially if you are able to give your hearers detailed descriptions of the life led by foreigners who occupy positions corresponding to their own. Peasants can be made to take an interest in astronomy even, though you cannot tell them anything about the peasants in Jupiter and Mars, and there is always, at starting, the great difficulty of persuading them to trust science about the motion and rotundity of the earth.

Intellectual charity.

A very direct form of intellectual charity is that of gratuitous teaching, both in classes and by public lectures, open to all comers. A great deal of light has in this way been spread abroad in cities, but in country villages there is little encouragement to enterprises of this kind, the intelligence of farm labourers being less awakened than that of the corresponding urban population. Let us remember, however, that one of the very highest and last achievements of the cultivated intellect is the art of conveying to the uncultivated, the untaught, the unprepared, the best and noblest knowledge which they are capable of assimilating. No one who, like the writer of these pages, has lived much in the country, and much amongst a densely ignorant peasantry, will be likely in any plans of enlightenment to err far on the side of enthusiastic hopefulness. The mind of a farm labourer, or that of a small farmer, is almost always sure to be a remarkably stiff soil, in which few intellectual conceptions can

take root; yet these few may make the difference between an existence worthy of a man, and one that differs from the existence of a brute in little beyond the possession of articulate language. We to whom the rich inheritance of intellectual humanity is so familiar as to have lost much of its freshness, are liable to underrate the value of thoughts and discoveries which to us have for years seemed commonplace. It is with our intellectual as with our material wealth; we do not realize how precious some fragments of it might be to our poorer neighbours. The old clothes that we wear no longer may give comfort and confidence to a man in naked destitution; the truths which are so familiar to us that we never think about them, may raise the utterly ignorant to a sense of their human brotherhood.

Value of what seems to us commonplace.

Above all, in the exercise of our intellectual charities, let us accustom ourselves to feel satisfied with humble results and small successes; and here let me make a confession which may be of some possible use to others. When a young man, I taught a drawing-class gratuitously, beginning with thirty-six pupils, who dwindled gradually to eleven. Soon afterwards I gave up the work from dissatisfaction, on account of the meagre attendance. This was very wrong—the eleven were worth the thirty-six; and so long as one of the eleven remained I ought to have contentedly taught him. The success of a teacher is not to be measured by the numbers whom he immediately influences. It is enough, it has been proved to be enough in more than one remarkable instance, that a single living soul should be in unison with the soul of a master, and receive his thought by sympathy. The one disciple teaches in his turn, and the idea is propagated.

Humble results

PART X. LETTER IV.

LETTER IV.

TO THE FRIEND OF A MAN OF HIGH CULTURE WHO PRODUCED NOTHING.

Joubert—"Not yet time," or else "The time is past"—His weakness for production—Three classes of minds—A more perfect intellectual life attainable by the silent student than by authors—He may follow his own genius—Saving of time effected by abstinence from writing—The unproductive may be more influential than the prolific.

WHEN I met B. at your house last week, you whispered to me in the drawing-room that he was a man of the most remarkable attainments, who, to the great regret of all his friends, had never employed his abilities to any visible purpose. We had not time for a conversation on this subject, because B. himself immediately joined us.

Joubert. His talk reminded me very much of Joubert—not that I ever knew Joubert personally, though I have lived very near to Villeneuve-sur-Yonne, where Joubert lived; but he is one of those characters whom it is possible to know without having seen them in the flesh. His friends used to urge him to write something, and then he said, "*Pas encore.*" "Not yet; I need a long peace." Tranquillity came, and then he said that God had only given force to his mind for a limited time, and that the time was past. Therefore, as Sainte-Beuve observed, for Joubert there was no medium; either it was not yet time, or else the time was past.

Pas encore.

Too young or too old. Nothing is more common than for *other* people to say this of us. They often say "He is too young," as Napoleon said of Ingres, or else "He is too old," as Napoleon said of Greuze. It is more rare for a man

himself to shrink from every enterprise, first under the persuasion that he is unprepared, and afterwards because the time is no longer opportune. Yet there does exist a certain very peculiar class of highly-gifted, diffident, delicate, unproductive minds, which impress those around them with an almost superstitious belief in their possibilities, yet never do anything to justify that belief.

But may it not be doubted whether these minds *have* productive power of any kind? I believe that the full extent of Joubert's productive power is displayed in those sentences of his which have been preserved, and which reveal a genius of the rarest delicacy, but at the same time singularly incapable of sustained intellectual effort. He said that he could only compose slowly, and with an extreme fatigue. He believed, however, that the weakness lay in the instrument alone, in the composing faculties, and not in the faculties of thought, for he said that behind his weakness there was strength, as behind the strength of some others there was weakness.

Joubert's want of productive power.

In saying this, it is probable that Joubert did not overestimate himself. He *had* strength of a certain kind, or rather he had quality; he had distinction, which is a sort of strength in society and in literature. But he had no productive force, and I do not believe that his unproductiveness was a productiveness checked by a fastidious taste; I believe that it was real, that he was not organized for production.

Sainte-Beuve said that a modern philosopher was accustomed to distinguish three classes of minds—

Three classes of minds.

1. Those who are at once powerful and delicate, who excel as they propose, execute what they conceive, and reach the great and true beautiful—a rare *élite* amongst mortals.

Three classes of minds.

2. A class of minds especially characterized by their delicacy, who feel that their idea is superior to their execution, their intelligence greater than their talent, even when the talent is very real; they are easily dissatisfied with themselves, disdain easily won praises, and would rather judge, taste, and abstain from producing, than remain below their conception and themselves. Or if they write it is by fragments, for themselves only, at long intervals and at rare moments. Their fecundity is internal, and known to few.

3. Lastly, there is a third class of minds more powerful and less delicate or difficult to please, who go on producing and publishing themselves without being too much dissatisfied with their work.

The majority of our active painters and writers, who fill modern exhibitions, and produce the current literature of the day, belong to the last class, to which we are all greatly indebted for the daily bread of literature and art.

But Sainte-Beuve believed that Joubert belonged to the second class, and I suspect that both Sainte-Beuve and many others have credited that class with a potential productiveness beyond its real endowments. Minds of the Joubert class are admirable and valuable in their way, but they are really, and not apparently, sterile.

Writing books.

And why would we have it otherwise? When we lament that a man of culture has "done nothing," as we say, we mean that he has not written books. Is it necessary, is it desirable, that every cultivated person should write books?

On the contrary, it seems that a more perfect intellectual life may be attained by the silent student than by authors. The writer for the public is often so far its slave that he is compelled by necessity or induced by

the desire for success (since it is humiliating to write unsaleable books as well as unprofitable) to deviate from his true path, to leave the subjects that most interest him for other subjects which interest him less, and therefore to acquire knowledge rather as a matter of business than as a labour of love. But the student who never publishes, and does not intend to publish, may follow his own genius and take the knowledge which belongs to him by natural affinity. Add to this the immense saving of time effected by abstinence from writing. Whilst the writer is polishing his periods, and giving hours to the artistic exigencies of mere form, the reader is adding to his knowledge. Thackeray said that writers were not great readers, because they had not the time.

Advantages of not writing.

The most studious Frenchman I ever met with used to say that he so hated the pen as scarcely to resolve to write a letter. He reminded me of Joubert in this; he often said, "J'ai horreur de la plume." Since he had no profession his leisure was unlimited, and he employed it in educating himself without any other purpose than this, the highest purpose of all, to become a cultivated man. The very prevalent idea that lives of this kind are failures unless they leave some visible achievement as a testimony and justification of their labours, is based upon a narrow conception both of duty and of utility. Men of this unproductive class are sure to influence their immediate neighbourhood by the example of their life. Isolated as they are too frequently in the provinces, in the midst of populations destitute of the higher culture, they often establish the notion of it notwithstanding the contemptuous estimates of the practical people around them. A single intellectual life, thus modestly lived through in the obscurity of a country-town, may leave a tradition

Utility of men who do not write.

PART X. LETTER IV.

and become an enduring influence. In this, as in all things, let us trust the arrangements of Nature. If men are at the same time constitutionally studious and constitutionally unproductive, it must be that production is not the only use of study. Joubert was right in keeping silence when he felt no impulses to speak, right also in saying the little that he did say without a superfluous word. His mind is more fully known, and more influential, than many which are abundantly productive.

Joubert.

LETTER V.

LETTER V.

TO A STUDENT WHO FELT HURRIED AND DRIVEN.

Some intellectual products possible only in excitement—Byron's authority on the subject—Can inventive minds work regularly?—Sir Walter Scott's opinion—Napoleon on the winning of victories—The prosaic business of men of genius—"Waiting for inspiration"—Rembrandt's advice to a young painter—Culture necessary to inspiration itself—Byron, Keats, Morris—Men of genius may be regular as students.

In my last letter to you on quiet regularity of work, I did not give much consideration to another matter which, in certain kinds of work, has to be taken into account, for I preferred to make that the subject of a separate letter. There are certain intellectual products which are only possible in hours or minutes of great cerebral excitement. Byron said that when people were surprised to find poets very much like others in the ordinary intercourse of life, their surprise was due to ignorance of this. If people knew, Byron said, that poetical production came from an excitement which from its intensity could only be temporary, they would not expect poets

Excitement necessary to poetical production.

PART X. LETTER

to be very different from other people when not under the influence of this excitement. Now, we may take the word "poet," in this connection, in the very largest sense. All men who have the gift of invention are poets. The inventive ideas come to them at unforeseen moments, and have to be seized when they come, so that the true inventor works sometimes with vertiginous rapidity, and afterwards remains for days or weeks without exercising the inventive faculty at all. The question is, can you make an inventive mind work on the principle of measured and regular advance? Is such counsel as that in my former letter applicable to inventors?

Poets, their manner of work.

Scott said, that although he had known many men of ordinary abilities who were capable of perfect regularity in their habits, he had never known a man of genius who was so. The popular impression concerning men of genius is very strong in the same sense, but it is well not to attach too much importance to popular impressions concerning men of genius, for the obvious reason that such men come very little under popular observation. When they work it is usually in the most perfect solitude, and even people who live in the same house know very little, really, of their intellectual habits.

Scott on the irregularity of men of genius.

The truth seems to be, first, that the moments of high excitement, of noblest invention, are rare, and not to be commanded by the will; but, on the other hand, that in order to make the gift of invention produce its full effect in any department of human effort, vast labours of preparation are necessary, and these labours may be pursued as steadily as you like. Napoleon I. used to say that battles were won by the sudden flashing of an idea through the brain of the commander at a certain critical instant. The capacity for generating this sudden electric

Labours of preparation necessary

Napoleon I.

PART X. LETTER V.

spark was military genius. The spark flashed independently of the will; the General could not win that vivid illumination by labour or by prayer; it came only in the brain of genius from the intense anxiety and excitement of actual conflict. Napoleon seems always to have counted upon it, always to have believed that when the critical instant arrived the wild confusion of the battle-field would be illuminated for him by that burst of sudden flame. But if Napoleon had been ignorant of the prosaic business of his profession, to which he attended more closely than any other commander, what would these moments of supreme clearness have availed him, or would they ever have come to him at all? If they had come to him, they would have revealed only the extent of his own negligence. Instead of showing him *what to do*, they would have made painfully evident what *ought to have been done*. But it is more probable that these clear moments would never have occurred to a mind unprepared by study. Clear military inspirations never occur to shopkeepers and farmers, as bright ideas about checkmates occur only to persons who have studied chess. The prosaic business, then, of the man of genius is to accumulate that preparatory knowledge without which his genius can never be available, and he can do work of this kind as regularly as he likes.

Napoleon's flash of inspiration.

Necessity for preparation.

The one fatal mistake which is committed habitually by people who have the scarcely desirable gift of half-genius is "waiting for inspiration." They pass week after week in a state of indolence, unprofitable alike to the mind and the purse, under pretext of waiting for intellectual flashes like those which came to Napoleon on his battle-fields. They ought to remember the advice given by one of the greatest artists of the seventeenth

Waiting for inspiration.

century to a young painter of his acquaintance. "Practise assiduously what you already know, and in course of time other things will become clear to you." The inspirations come only to the disciplined; the indolent wait for them in vain.

Intense excitement cannot be perpetual.

If you have genius, therefore, or believe you have, it is admitted that you cannot be perpetually in a state of intense excitement. If you were in that state without ceasing, you would go mad. You cannot be expected to write poetry in the plodding ox-pace manner advocated for intellectual work generally in my last letter. As for that good old comparison between the hare and the tortoise, it may be answered for you, simply, that you are not a tortoise, and that what is a most wise procedure for tortoises may be impracticable for you. The actual composition of poetry, especially poetry of a fiery kind, like—

"The isles of Greece, the isles of Greece,"

of Byron, is to be done not when the poet will, but when he can, or rather, when he *must*.

Culture necessary for poetry.

But if you are a wise genius you will feel how necessary is culture even for work of that kind. Byron would not have felt any enthusiasm for the isles of Greece if he had not known something of their history. The verses are an inspiration, but they could never have occurred to a quite uncultivated person, however bright his inspirations. Even more obviously was the genius of Keats dependent upon his culture. He did not read Greek, but from translations of Greek literature and from the direct study of Greek art he got the sort of material that he needed. And in our own day Morris has been evidently a very diligent student of many literatures. What

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I insist upon is, that we could not have had the real Keats, the real Morris, unless they had prepared themselves by culture. We see immediately that the work they have done is *their* work, specially, that they were specially adapted for it—inspired for it, if you will. But how evident it is that the inspiration could never have produced the work, or anything like it, without labour in the accumulation of material!

Men of genius can be regular students.

Now, although men of genius cannot be regularly progressive in actual production, cannot write so many verses a day, regularly, as you may spin yarn, they can be very regular as students, and some of the best of them have been quite remarkable for unflinching steadiness of application in that way. The great principle recommended by Mr. Galton, of not looking forward eagerly to the end of your journey, but interesting yourself chiefly in the progress of it, is as applicable to the studies of men of genius as to those of more ordinary persons.

LETTER VI.

LETTER VI.

TO AN ARDENT FRIEND WHO TOOK NO REST.

On some verses of Goethe—Man not constituted like a planet—Matthew Arnold's poem, "Self-dependence"—Poetry and prose—The wind more imitable than the stars—The stone in Glen Croe—Rest and be thankful.

"RAMBLING over the wild moors, with thoughts oftentimes as wild and dreary as those moors, the young Carlyle, who had been cheered through his struggling sadness, and strengthened for the part he was to play in life, by the beauty and the wisdom which Goethe

had revealed to him, suddenly conceived the idea that it would be a pleasant and a fitting thing if some of the few admirers in England forwarded to Weimar a trifling token of their admiration. On reaching home Mr. Carlyle at once sketched the design of a seal to be engraved, the serpent of eternity encircling a star, with the words *ohne Hast, ohne Rast* (unhasting, unresting), in allusion to the well-known verses— PART X. LETTER

Verses of Goethe.

'Wie das Gestirn,
Ohne Hast
Aber ohne Rast
Drehe sich jeder
Um die eigne Last.'

(Like a star, unhasting, unresting, be each one fulfilling his God-given 'hest.')"[1]

This is said so beautifully, and seems so wise, that it may easily settle down into the mind as a maxim and rule of life. Had we been told in plain prose to take no rest, without the beautiful simile of the star, and without the wise restriction about haste, our common sense would have rebelled at once; but as both beauty and wisdom exist together in the gem-like stanza, our judgment remains silent in charmed acquiescence.

Stars and men.

Let us ask ourselves, however, about this stellar example, whether man is naturally so constituted as to be able to imitate it. A planet moves without haste, because it is incapable of excitement; and without rest, because it is incapable of fatigue. A planet makes no effort, and encounters no friction or resistance of any kind. Man is so constituted as to feel frequently the stimulus of excitement, which immediately translates

[1] Lewes's "Life of Goethe," Book vii. chap. 8.

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Men and stars.

itself either into actual acceleration or into the desire for acceleration—a desire which cannot be restrained without an effort; and whatever man undertakes to do he encounters friction and resistance, which, for him, always sooner or later inevitably induce fatigue. Man is neither constituted like a star nor situated like a star, and therefore it is not possible for him to exist as stars exist.

You will object to this criticism that it handles a delicate little poem very roughly, and you may tell me that I am unfit to receive the wisdom of the poets, which is always uttered with a touch of Oriental exaggeration. Certainly Goethe could never mean that a man should kill himself by labours literally incessant. Goethe's own life is the best elucidation of his true meaning. The example of the star was held up to us to be followed only within the limits of our human nature, as a Christian points to the example of Christ. In the same spirit Matthew Arnold wrote his noble poem "Self-dependence," in which he tells us to live like the stars and the sea:—

Goethe's meaning.

Matthew Arnold's poem "Self-dependence."

"Ah, once more," I cried, "ye stars, ye waters,
On my heart your mighty charm renew;
Still, still let me, as I gaze upon you,
Feel my soul becoming vast like you."

From the intense, clear, star-sown vault of heaven,
Over the lit sea's unquiet way,
In the rustling night-air came the answer:
"Wouldst thou *be* as these are? *Live* as they.

"Unaffrighted by the silence round them,
Undistracted by the sights they see,
These demand not that the things without them
Yield them love, amusement, sympathy."

The true intention of poetical teachings like these is in the influence they have over the feelings. If a star makes me steadier in my labour, less of a victim to vain agitation, in consequence of Goethe's verses; if the stars and the sea together renew more fully their mighty charm upon my heart because those stanzas of Arnold have fixed themselves in my memory, the poets have done their work. But the more positive *prosateur* has his work to do also, and you, as it seems to me, need this positive help of prose.

You are living a great deal too much like a star, and not enough like a human being. You do not hasten often, but you *never* rest, except when Nature mercifully prostrates you in irresistible sleep. Like the stars and the sea in Arnold's poem, you do not ask surrounding things to yield you love, amusement, sympathy. The stars and the sea can do without these refreshments of the brain and heart, but you cannot. Rest is necessary to recruit your intellectual forces; sympathy is necessary to prevent your whole nature from stiffening like a rotifer without moisture; love is necessary to make life beautiful for you, as the plumage of certain birds becomes splendid when they pair, and without amusement you will lose the gaiety which wise men try to keep as the best legacy of youth.

Necessity for rest, sympathy and love

Let your rest be perfect in its season, like the rest of waters that are still. If you will have a model for your living, take neither the stars, for they fly without ceasing, nor the ocean that ebbs and flows, nor the river that cannot stay, but rather let your life be like that of the summer air, which has times of noble energy and times of perfect peace. It fills the sails of ships upon the sea, and the miller thanks it on the breezy uplands; it works

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generously for the health and wealth of all men, yet it claims its hours of rest. "I have pushed the fleet, I have turned the mill, I have refreshed the city, and now, though the captain may walk impatiently on the quarter-deck, and the miller swear, and the city stink, I will stir no more until it pleases me."

The art of resting.

You have learned many things, my friend, but one thing you have *not* learned—the art of resting. That stone in Glen Croe ought to have impressed its lesson on the mind of many a traveller, long before Earl Russell gave it a newspaper celebrity. Have we not rested there together, you and I, a little in advance of the coach, which the weary horses were still slowly dragging up the tedious hill? And as we sat on the turf, and looked down the misty glen, did we not read the lesson there engraven? How good and *human* the idea was, the idea of setting up that graven stone in the wilderness; how full of sympathy is that inscription for all the weakness and weariness of humanity! Once, in the ardour of youth, there shone before me a golden star in heaven, and on the deep azure around it "*Ohne Hast, ohne Rast,*" in letters of steady flame; but now I see more frequently a plain little stone set up in the earth, with the inscription, "Rest, and be thankful!"

"Rest, and be thankful."

Is not the stone just a little like a gravestone, my friend? Perhaps it is. But if we take rest when we require it during life, we shall not need the grave's rest quite so soon.

LETTER VII.

TO AN ARDENT FRIEND WHO TOOK NO REST.

The regret for lost time often a needless one—Tillier's doctrine about *flânerie*—How much is gained in idle hours—Sainte-Beuve's conviction that whatever he did he studied the infinite book of the world and of life—Harness—Free play of the mind necessary—The freedom of a grain of desert-sand—The freedom of the wild bee.

Desire to economize time

IF we asked any intellectual workman what he would do if his life were to be lived over again, I believe the answer, whatever its form, would amount ultimately to this: "I would economize my time better." Very likely if the opportunity were granted him he would do nothing of the sort; very likely he would waste his time in ways more authorized by custom, yet waste it just as extravagantly as he had done after his own original fashion; but it always seems to us as if we could use the time better if we had it over again.

Time really wasted.

It seems to me, in looking back over the last thirty years, that the only time really wasted has been that spent in laborious obedience to some external authority. It may be a dangerous doctrine which Claude Tillier expressed in an immortal sentence, but dangerous or not, it is full of intellectual truth: "Le temps le mieux employé est celui que l'on perd."[1] If what we are accustomed to consider lost time could be removed, as to its effects at least, from the sum of our existence, it is certain that we should suffer from a great intellectual impoverishment. All the best knowledge of mankind,

Tillier's doctrine.

[1] The best employed time is that which one loses.

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to begin with, is acquired in hours which hard-working people consider lost hours—in hours, that is, of pleasure and recreation. Deduct all that we have learnt about men in times of recreation, in clubs and smoking-rooms, on the hunting-field, on the cricket-ground, on the deck of the yacht, on the box of the drag or the dog-cart, would the residue be worth very much? would it not be a mere heap of dry bones without any warm flesh to cover them? Even the education of most of us, such as it is, has been in a great measure acquired out of school, as it were; I mean outside of the acknowledged duties of our more serious existence. Few Englishmen past forty have studied English literature either as a college exercise or a professional preparation; they have read it privately, as an amusement. Few Englishmen past forty have studied modern languages, or science, or the fine arts, from any obedience to duty, but merely from taste and inclination. And even if we studied these things formally, as young men often do at the present day, it is not from the formal study that we should get the *perfume* of the language or the art, but from idle hours in foreign lands and galleries. It is superfluous to recommend idleness to the unintellectual, but the intellectual too often undervalue it. The laborious intellect contracts a habit of strenuousness which is sometimes a hindrance to its best activity.

Education out of school.

Value of idleness.

"I have arrived," said Sainte-Beuve, "perhaps by way of secretly excusing my own idleness, perhaps by a deeper feeling of the principle that all comes to the same, at the conclusion that whatever I do or do not, working in the study at continuous labour, scattering myself in articles, spreading myself about in society, giving my time away to troublesome callers, to poor people, to *rendezvous*, in

The conclusion Sainte-Beuve arrived at.

the street, no matter to whom and to what, I cease not to do one and the same thing, to read one and the same book, the infinite book of the world and of life, that no one ever finishes, in which the wisest read farthest; I read it then at all the pages which present themselves, in broken fragments, backwards, what matters it? I never cease going on. The greater the medley, the more frequent the interruption, the more I get on with this book in which one is never beyond the middle; but the profit is to have had it open before one at all sorts of different pages."

Sainte-Beuve's opinion on occupation.

A distinguished author wrote to another author, less distinguished: "You have gone through a good deal of really vigorous study, but have not *been in harness* yet." By harness he meant discipline settled beforehand like military drill. Now, the advantages of drill are evident and very generally recognized, but the advantages of intellectual *flânerie* are not so generally recognized. For the work of the intellect to be clear and healthy, a great deal of free play of the mind is absolutely necessary. Harness is good for an hour or two at a time, but the finest intellects have never *lived* in harness. In reading any book that has much vitality you are sure to meet with many allusions and illustrations which the author hit upon, not when he was in harness, but out at grass. Harness trains us to the systematic performance of our work, and increases our practical strength by regulated exercise, but it does not supply everything that is necessary to the perfect development of the mind. The truth is, that we need both the discipline of harness and the abundant nourishment of the free pasture. Yet may not our freedom be the profitless, choiceless, freedom of a grain of desert-sand, carried hither and thither by the

Harness.

Flânerie.

Free pasture.

PART X. LETTER VII.

wind, gaining nothing and improving nothing, so that it does not signify where it was carried yesterday or where it may fall to-morrow, but rather the liberty of the wild bee, whose coming and going are ordered by no master, nor fixed by any premeditated regulation, yet which misses no opportunity of increase, and comes home laden in the twilight. Who knows where he has wandered; who can tell over what banks and streams the hum of his wings has sounded? Is anything in nature freer than he is; can anything account better for a rational use of freedom? Would he do his work better if tiny harness were ingeniously contrived for him? Where then would be the golden honey, and where the waxen cells?

Freedom of the wild bee.

LETTER VIII. LETTER VIII.

TO A FRIEND (HIGHLY CULTIVATED) WHO CONGRATULATED HIMSELF ON HAVING ENTIRELY ABANDONED THE HABIT OF READING NEWSPAPERS.

Advantages in economy of time—Much of what we read in newspapers is useless to our culture—The too great importance which they attach to novelty—Distortion by party spirit—An instance of false presentation—Gains to serenity by abstinence from newspapers—Newspapers keep up our daily interest in each other—The French peasantry—The newspaper-reading Americans—An instance of total abstinence from newspapers—Auguste Comte—A suggestion of Emerson's—The work of newspaper correspondents—War correspondents—Mr. Stanley—M. Erdan, of the *Temps*.

Abstinence from newspapers.

YOUR abstinence from newspaper reading is not a new experiment in itself, though it is new in reference to your particular case, and I await its effects with interest. I shall be curious to observe the consequences, to an intel-

lect constituted as yours is, of that total cutting off from the public interests of your own century which an abstinence from newspapers implies. It is clear that, whatever the loss may be, you have a definite gain to set against it. The time which you have hitherto given to newspapers, and which may be roughly estimated at about five hundred hours a year, is henceforth a valuable time-income to be applied to whatever purposes your best wisdom may select. When an intellectual person has contrived by the force of one simple resolution to effect so fine an economy as this, it is natural that he should congratulate himself. Your feelings must be like those of an able finance minister who has found means of closing a great leak in the treasury—if any economy possible in the finances of a State could ever relatively equal that splendid stroke of time-thrift which your force of will has enabled you to effect. In those five hundred hours, which are now your own, you may acquire a science or obtain a more perfect command over one of the languages which you have studied. Some department of your intellectual labours which has hitherto been unsatisfactory to you, because it was too imperfectly cultivated, may henceforth be as orderly and as fruitful as a well-kept garden. You may become thoroughly conversant with the works of more than one great author whom you have neglected, not from lack of interest, but from want of time. You may open some old chamber of the memory that has been dark and disused for many a year; you may clear the cobwebs away, and let the fresh light in, and make it habitable once again.

Time given to newspapers

Value of it if devoted culture.

Against these gains, of which some to a man of your industry are certain, and may be counted upon, what must be our estimate of the amount of sacrifice or loss?

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It is clear to both of us that much of what we read in the newspapers is useless to our culture. A large proportion of newspaper-writing is occupied with speculations on what is likely to happen in the course of a few months; therefore, by waiting until the time is past, we know the event without having wasted time in speculations which could not affect it. Another rather considerable fraction of newspaper matter consists of small events which have interest for the day, owing to their novelty, but which will not have the slightest permanent importance. The whole press of a newspaper-reading country, like England or America, may be actively engaged during the space of a week or a fortnight in discussing some incident which everybody will have forgotten in six months; and besides these sensational incidents, there are hundreds of less notorious ones, often fictitious, inserted simply for the temporary amusement of the reader. The greatest evil of newspapers, in their effect on the intellectual life, is the enormous importance which they are obliged to attach to mere novelty. From the intellectual point of view, it is of no consequence whether a thought occurred twenty-two centuries ago to Aristotle or yesterday evening to Mr. Charles Darwin, and it is one of the distinctive marks of the truly intellectual to be able to take a hearty interest in all truth, independently of the date of its discovery. The emphasis given by newspapers to novelty exhibits things in wrong relations, as the lantern shows you what is nearest at the cost of making the general landscape appear darker by the contrast. Besides this exhibition of things in wrong relations, there is a positive distortion arising from the unscrupulousness of party, a distortion which extends far beyond the limits of the empire. An essay might be written on the distortion of English

Unimportant matter in newspapers.

Greatest evil of newspapers.

Emphasis given to novelty.

Specimen of false presentation in party writing.

affairs in the French press, or of French affairs in the English press, by writers who are as strongly partisan in another country as in their own. "It is such a grand thing," wrote an English Paris correspondent in 1870, "for Adolphus Thiers, son of a poor labourer of Aix, and in early life a simple journalist, to be at the head of the Government of France." This is a fair specimen of the kind of false presentation which is so common in party journalism. The newspaper from which I have quoted it was strongly opposed to Thiers, being in fact one of the principal organs of the English Bonapartists. It is not true that Thiers was the son of a poor labourer of Aix. His father was a workman of Marseilles, his mother belonged to a family in which neither wealth nor culture had been rare, and his mother's relatives had him educated at the Lycée. The art of the journalist in bringing together the two extremes of a career remarkable for its steady ascent had for its object to produce the idea of incongruity, of sudden and unsuitable elevation. Not only M. Thiers, however, but every human being starts from a very small beginning, since every man begins life as a baby. It is a great rise for one baby to the Presidency of the French Republic; it was also a great rise for other babies who have attained the premiership of England. The question is, not what Thiers may have been seventy years ago, but what he was immediately before his acceptance of the highest office of the State. He was the most trusted and the most experienced citizen, so that the last step in his career was as natural as the elevation of Reynolds to the presidency of the Academy.

Career of M. Thiers.

It is difficult for anyone who cares for justice to read party journals without frequent irritation, and it does not

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Unfairness of party spirit.

signify which side the newspaper takes. Men are so unfair in controversy that we best preserve the serenity of the intellect by studiously avoiding all literature that has a controversial tone. By your new rule of abstinence from newspapers you will no doubt gain almost as much in serenity as in time. To the ordinary newspaper reader there is little loss of serenity, because he reads only the newspaper that he agrees with, and however unfair it is, he is pleased by its unfairness. But the highest and best culture makes us disapprove of unfairness on our own side of the question also. We are pained by it; we feel humiliated by it; we lament its persistence and its perversity.

I have said nearly all that has to be said in favour of your rule of abstinence. I have granted that the newspapers cost us much time, which, if employed for great intellectual purposes, would carry us very far; that they give disproportionate views of things by the emphasis they give to novelty, and false views by the unfairness which belongs to party. I might have added that newspaper writers give such a preponderance to politics—not political philosophy, but to the everyday work of politicians—that intellectual culture is thrown into the background, and the election of a single member of Parliament is made to seem of greater national importance than the birth of a powerful idea. And yet, notwithstanding all these considerations, which are serious indeed for the intellectual, I believe that your resolution is unwise, and that you will find it to be untenable. One momentous reason more than counterbalances all these considerations put together. Newspapers are to the whole civilized world what the daily house-talk is to the members of a household; they keep up our daily interest in each

What newspapers are.

other, they save us from the evils of isolation. To live as a member of the great white race of men, the race that has filled Europe and America, and colonized or conquered whatever other territories it has been pleased to occupy, to share from day to day its cares, its thoughts, its aspirations, it is necessary that every man should read his daily newspaper. Why are the French peasants so bewildered and at sea, so out of place in the modern world? It is because they never read a newspaper. And why are the inhabitants of the United States, though scattered over a territory fourteen times the area of France, so much more capable of concerted political action, so much more *alive* and modern, so much more interested in new discoveries of all kinds and capable of selecting and utilizing the best of them? It is because the newspaper penetrates everywhere; and even the lonely dweller on the prairie or in the forest is not intellectually isolated from the great currents of public life which flow through the telegraph and the press.

Non-readers of newspapers

Readers of newspapers

The experiment of doing without newspapers has been tried by a whole class, the French peasantry, with the consequences that we know, and it has also from time to time been tried by single individuals belonging to more enlightened sections of society. Let us take one instance, and let us note what appear to have been the effects of this abstinence. Auguste Comte abstained from newspapers as a teetotaller abstains from spirituous liquors. Now, Auguste Comte possessed a gift of nature which, though common in minor degrees, is in the degree in which he possessed it rarer than enormous diamonds. That gift was the power of dealing with abstract intellectual conceptions, and living amidst them always, as the practical mind lives in and deals with material things.

Auguste Comte an abstainer from newspapers

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Comte's instinct of preservation

And it happened in Comte's case, as it usually does happen in cases of very peculiar endowment, that the gift was accompanied by the instincts necessary to its perfect development and to its preservation. Comte instinctively avoided the conversation of ordinary people, because he felt it to be injurious to the perfect exercise of his faculty, and for the same reason he would not read newspapers. In imposing upon himself these privations he acted like a very eminent living etcher, who, having the gift of an extraordinary delicacy of hand, preserves it by abstinence from everything that may affect the steadiness of the nerves. There is a certain difference, however, between the two cases which I am anxious to accentuate. The etcher runs no risk of any kind by his rule of abstinence. He refrains from several common indulgences, but he denies himself nothing that is necessary to health. I may even go farther, and say that the rules which he observes for the sake of perfection in his art, might be observed with advantage by many who are not artists, for the sake of their own tranquillity, without the loss of anything but pleasure. The rules which Comte made for himself involved, on the other hand, a great peril. In detaching himself so completely from the interests and ways of thinking of ordinary men, he elaborated, indeed, the conceptions of the positive philosophy, but arrived afterwards at a peculiar kind of intellectual decadence from which it is possible—probable even—that the rough common sense of the newspapers might have preserved him. They would have saved him, I seriously believe, from that mysticism which led to the invention of a religion far surpassing in unreasonableness the least rational of the creeds of tradition. It is scarcely imaginable, except on the supposition of actual insanity,

Peril of Comte's rules.

Comte's religion

that any regular reader of the *Times*, the *Temps*, the *Daily News*, and the *Saturday Review*, should believe the human race to be capable of receiving as the religion of its maturity the Comtist Trinity and the Comtist Virgin Mother. A Trinity consisting of the Great Being (or humanity), the Great Fetish (or the earth), and the Great Midst (or space); a hope for the human race (how unphysiological!) that women might ultimately arrive at maternity independently of virile help,—these are conceptions so remote, not only from the habits of modern thought, but (what is more important) from its tendencies, that they could not occur to a mind in regular communication with its contemporaries.

A suggestion of Emerson's.

"If you should transfer the amount of your reading day by day from the newspaper to the standard authors?" To this suggestion of Emerson's it may be answered that the loss would be greater than the gain. The writers of Queen Anne's time could educate an Englishman of Queen Anne's time, but they can only partially educate an Englishman of Queen Victoria's time. The mind is like a merchant's ledger, it requires to be continually posted up to the latest date. Even the last telegram may have upset some venerable theory that has been received as infallible for ages.

Office of the journalist.

In times when great historical events are passing before our eyes, the journalist is to future historians what the African traveller is to the map-makers. His work is neither complete nor orderly, but it is the fresh record of an eye-witness, and enables us to become ourselves spectators of the mighty drama of the world. Never was this service so well rendered as it is now, by correspondents who achieve heroic feats of bodily and mental prowess, exposing themselves to the greatest dangers,

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and writing much and well in circumstances the most unfavourable to literary composition. How vividly the English war correspondents brought before us the reality of the great conflict between Germany and France! What a romantic achievement, worthy to be sung in heroic verse, was the finding of Livingstone by Stanley! Not less interesting have been the admirable series of letters by M. Erdan in the *Temps*, in which, with the firmness of a master-hand, he has painted from the life, week after week, year after year, the decline and fall of the temporal power of the Papacy. I cannot think that any page of Roman history is better worth reading than his letters, more interesting, instructive, lively, or authentic. Yet with your contempt for newspapers you would lose all this profitable entertainment, and seek instead of it the accounts of former epochs not half so interesting as this fall of the temporal power, accounts written in most cases by men in libraries who had not seen the sovereigns they wrote about, nor talked with the people whose condition they attempted to describe. You have a respect for these accounts because they are printed in books, and bound in leather, and entitled "history," whilst you despise the direct observation of a man like Erdan, because he is only a journalist, and his letters are published in a newspaper. Is there not some touch of prejudice in this, some mistake, some narrowness of intellectual aristocracy?

Mr. Stanley.

M. Erdan, the Roman correspondent of the Temps.

LETTER IX.

TO AN AUTHOR WHO APPRECIATED CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE.

Miss Mitford on the selfishness of authors—A suggestion of Emerson's—A laconic rule of his—Traces of jealousy—And of a more subtle feeling—A contradiction—Necessary to resist the invasion of the present—A certain equilibrium—The opposite of a pedant—The best classics not pedants, but artists.

READING the other day a letter by Miss Mitford, I was reminded of you as the eye is reminded of green when it sees scarlet. You, whose interest in literature has ever kept pace with the time, to whom no new thing is unwelcome if only it is good, are safe from her accusations; but how many authors have deserved them! Miss Mitford is speaking of a certain writer who is at the same time a clergyman, and whom it is not difficult to recognize.

Miss Mitford on the selfishness of authors.

"I never," she says, "saw him interested in the slightest degree by the work of any other author, except, indeed, one of his own followers or of his own clique, and then only as admiring or helping him. He has great kindness and great sympathy with working people, or with a dying friend, but I profess to you I am amazed at the utter selfishness of authors. I do not know one single poet who cares for any man's poetry but his own. In general they read no books except such as may be necessary to their own writings—that is, to the work they happen to be about, and even then I suspect that they only read the bits that they may immediately want. You know the absolute ignorance in which Wordsworth lived of all modern works; and if, out of compliment to

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a visitor, he thought it needful to seem to read or listen to two or three stanzas, he gave unhesitating praise to the writer himself, but took especial care not to repeat the praise where it might have done him good—utterly fair and false."

Emerson on the secondary writers.

There are touches of this spirit of indifference to contemporary literature in several writers and scholars whom we know. There are distinct traces of it even in published writings, though it is much more evident in private life and habit. Emerson seriously suggests that "the human mind would perhaps be a gainer if all the secondary writers were lost—say, in England, all but Shakespeare, Milton, and Bacon, through the profounder study so drawn to those wonderful minds." In the same spirit we have Emerson's laconic rule, "Never read any but famed books," which suggests the remark that if men had obeyed this rule from the beginning, no book could ever have acquired reputation, and nobody would ever have read anything. The idea of limiting English literature to a holy trinity of Shakespeare, Milton, and Bacon, and voluntarily losing all other authors, seems to me the most intense expression of the spirit of aristocracy in reading. It is as if a man were to decide in his own mind that society would be the better if all persons except the three Emperors were excluded from it. There is a want of reliance upon one's own judgment, and an excess of faith in the estimates of others, when we resolve to read only those books which come to us in the splendour of a recognized intellectual royalty. We read either to gain information, to have good thinking suggested to us, or to have our imagination stimulated. In the way of knowledge the best authors are always the most recent, so that Bacon could not suffice. In the way of thinking,

Famed books.

our methods have gained in precision since Milton's time, and we are helped by a larger experience than his. The one thing which Shakespeare and Milton can do for us quite perfectly still, is to fill our imagination richly, and give it a fine stimulus. But modern writers can render us the same service.

Jealousy of contemporaries.

Is there not a little jealousy of contemporaries in the persistence with which some authors avoid them, and even engage others to avoid them? May not there be a shade of another feeling than jealousy, a feeling more subtle in operation, the undefined apprehension that we may find, even amongst our more obscure contemporaries, merit equal to our own? So long as we restrict our reading to old books of great fame we are safe from this apprehension, for if we find admirable qualities, we know beforehand that the world has handsomely acknowledged them, and we indulge in the hope that our own admirable qualities will be recognized by posterity with equal liberality. But it creates an unpleasant feeling of uneasiness to see quantities of obscure contemporary work, done in a plain way to earn a living by men of third or fourth-rate reputation, or of no reputation at all, which in many respects would fairly sustain a comparison with our own. It is clear that an author ought to be the last person to advise the public not to read contemporary literature, since he is himself a maker of contemporary literature; and there is a direct contradiction between the invitation to read his book, which he circulates by the act of publishing, and the advice which the book contains. Emerson is more safe from this obvious rejoinder when he suggests to us to transfer our reading day by day from the newspaper to the standard authors. But are these suggestions anything more than

Another feeling.

Obscure contemporary work.

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the reaction of an intellectual man against the too prevalent customs of the world? The reading practised by most people, by all who do not set before themselves intellectual culture as one of the definite aims of life, is remarkable for the regularity with which it neglects all the great authors of the past. The books provided by the circulating library, the reviews and magazines, the daily newspapers, are read whilst they are novelties, but the standard authors are left on their shelves unopened. We require a firm resolution to resist this invasion of what is new, because it flows like an unceasing river, and unless we protect our time against it by some solid embankment of unshakable rule and resolution, every nook and cranny of it will be filled and flooded. An Englishman whose life was devoted to culture, but who lived in an out-of-the-way place on the Continent, told me that he considered it a decided advantage to his mind to live quite outside of the English library system, because if he wanted to read a new book he had to buy it and pay heavily for carriage besides, which made him very careful in his choice. For the same reason he rejoiced that the nearest English news-room was two hundred miles from his residence.

Neglect of standard authors.

The invasion of novelty.

But, on the other hand, what would be the condition of a man's mind who never read anything but the classic authors? He would live in an intellectual monastery, and would not even understand the classic authors themselves, for we understand the past only by referring it to what we know in the present.

It is best to preserve our minds in a state of equilibrium, and not to allow our repugnance to what we see as an evil to drive us into an evil of an opposite kind. We are too often like those little toy-fish with a bit of

steel in their mouths, which children attract with a magnet. If you present the positive pole of the magnet, the fish rushes at it at once, but if you offer the negative end it retreats continually. Everything relatively to our character has this positive or negative end, and we either rush to things or rush away from them. Some persons are actually driven away from the most entertaining writers because they happen to be what are called classics, because pedants boast of having read them. I know a man who is exactly the opposite of a pedant, who has a horror of the charlatanism which claims social and intellectual position as the reward for having laboriously waded through those authors who are conventionally termed "classical," and this opposition to pedantry has given him an aversion to the classics themselves, which he never opens. The shallow pretence to admiration of famous writers which is current in the world is so distasteful to the love of honesty and reality which is the basis of his character, that by an unhappy association of ideas he has acquired a repugnance to the writers themselves. But such men as Horace, Terence, Shakespeare, Molière, though they have had the misfortune to be praised and commentated upon by pedants, were in their lives the precise opposite of pedants; they were *artists* whose study was human nature, and who lived without pretension in the common world of men. The pedants have a habit of considering these genial old artists as in some mysterious way their own private property, for do not the pedants live by expounding them? And some of us are frightened away from the fairest realms of poetry by the fences of these grim guardians.

The classics made repulsive by the praise of pedants.

Classical authors not themselves pedants but artists.

PART X.
LETTER V.

LETTER X.

TO AN AUTHOR WHO KEPT VERY IRREGULAR HOURS.

ulian Fane—His late hours—Regularity produced by habit—The time of the principal effort—That the chief work should be done in the best hours—Physicians prefer early to late work—The practice of Goethe and some modern authors—The morning worker ought to live in a tranquil neighbourhood—Night-work—The medical objection to it—The student's objection to day-work—Time to be kept in masses by adults, but divided into small portions by children—Rapid tuning of the mind—Cuvier eminent for this faculty—The Duke of Wellington—The faculty more available with some occupations than others—The slavery of a minute obedience to the clock—Broad rules the best—Books of agenda, good in business, but not in the higher intellectual pursuits.

WHAT you told me of your habits in the employment of your hours reminded me of Julian Fane. Mr. Lytton tells us that "after a long day of professional business, followed by a late evening of social amusement, he would return in the small hours of the night to his books, and sit, unwearied, till sunrise in the study of them. Nor did he then seem to suffer from this habit of late hours. His nightly vigils occasioned no appearance of fatigue the next day. . . . He rarely rose before noon, and generally rose much later."

Julian Fane's late hours.

But however irregular a man's distribution of his time may be in the sense of wanting the government of fixed rules, there always comes in time a certain regularity by the mere operation of habit. People who get up very late hardly ever do so in obedience to a rule; many get up early by rule, and many more are told that they

ought to get up early, and believe it, and aspire to that virtue, but fail to carry it into practice. The late-risers are rebels and sinners—in this respect—to a man, and so persistently have the wise, from Solomon downwards, harped upon the moral loveliness of early rising and the degradation which follows the opposite practice, that one can hardly get up after eight without either an uncomfortable sense of guilt or an extraordinary callousness. Yet the late-risers, though obeying no rule, for the abandoned sinner recognizes none, become regular in their late rising from the gradual fixing power of habit. Even Julian Fane, though he regretted his desultory ways, "and dwelt with great earnestness on the importance of regular habits of work," was perhaps less irregular than he himself believed. We are sure to acquire habits; what is important is not so much that the habits should be regular, as that their regularity should be of the kind most favourable in the long run to the accomplishment of our designs, and this never comes by chance, it is the result of an effort of the will in obedience to governing wisdom.

Regularity produced by habit.

The first question which everyone who has the choice of his hours must settle for himself is at what time of day he will make his principal effort; for the day of every intellectual workman ought to be marked by a kind of artistic composition; there ought to be some one labour distinctly recognized as dominant, with others in subordination, and subordination of various degrees. Now for the hours at which the principal effort ought to be made, it is not possible to fix them by the clock so as to be suitable for everybody, but a broad rule may be arrived at which is applicable to all imaginable cases. The rule is this—to do the chief work in the best hours; to give it

The principal effort.

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The heaviest work, when it should be done.

the pick of your day; and by the day I do not mean only the solar day, but the whole of the twenty-four hours. There is an important physiological reason for giving the best hours to the most important work. The better the condition of the brain and the body, and the more favourable the surrounding circumstances, the smaller will be the cost to the organization of the labour that has to be done. It is always the safest way to do the heaviest (or most important) work at the time and under the conditions which make it the least costly.

Physicians: their preference of early to late work.

Physicians are unanimous in their preference of early to late work; and no doubt, if the question were not complicated by other considerations, we could not do better than to follow their advice in its simplicity. Goethe wrote in the morning, with his faculties refreshed by sleep and not yet excited by any stimulant. I could

Several living authors.

mention several living authors of eminence who pursue the same plan, and find it favourable alike to health and to production. The rule which they follow is never to write after lunch, leaving the rest of their time free for study and society, both of which are absolutely necessary to authors. According to this system it is presumed that the hours between breakfast and lunch are the best hours. In many cases they are so. A person in fair health, after taking a light early breakfast without any heavier stimulant than tea or coffee, finds himself in a

Feelings in the morning.

state of freshness highly favourable to sound and agreeable thinking. His brain will be in still finer order if the breakfast has been preceded by a cold bath, with friction and a little exercise. The feeling of freshness, cleanliness, and moderate exhilaration, will last for several hours, and during those hours the intellectual work will probably be both lively and reasonable. It

is difficult for a man who feels cheerful and refreshed, and whose task seems easy and light, to write anything morbid or perverse.

Work in the morning.

But for the morning to be so good as I have just described it, the workman must be quite favourably situated. He ought to live in a very tranquil neighbourhood, and to be as free as possible from anxiety as to what the postman may have in reserve for him. If his study-window looks out on a noisy street, and if the day is sure, as it wears on, to bring anxious business of its own, then the increasing noise and the apprehension (even though it be almost entirely unconscious) of impending business, will be quite sufficient to interfere with the work of any man who is the least in the world nervous, and almost all intellectual labourers *are* nervous, more or less. Men who have the inestimable advantage of absolute tranquillity, at all times, do well to work in the morning, but those who can only get tranquillity at times independent of their own choice have a strong reason for working at those times, whether they happen to be in the morning or not.

Work at night.

In an excellent article on "Work" (evidently written by an experienced intellectual workman), which appeared in one of the early numbers of the *Cornhill Magazine*, and was remarkable alike for practical wisdom and the entire absence of traditional dogmatism, the writer speaks frankly in favour of night-work. "If you can work at all at night, one hour at that time is worth any two in the morning. The house is hushed, the brain is clear, the distracting influences of the day are at an end. You have not to disturb yourself with thoughts of what you are about to do, or what you are about to suffer. You know that there is a gulf between you and the affairs of

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the outside world, almost like the chasm of death; and that you need not take thought of the morrow until the morrow has come. There are few really great thoughts, such as the world will not willingly let die, that have not been conceived under the quiet stars."

Night-work. Objections.

The medical objection to night-work in the case of literary men would probably be that the night is *too* favourable to literary production. The author of the Essay just quoted says that at night "you only drift into deeper silence *and quicker inspiration*. If the right mood is upon you, *you write on;* if not, your pillow awaits you." Exactly so; that is to say, the brain, owing to the complete external tranquillity, can so concentrate its efforts on the subject in hand as to work itself up into a luminous condition which is fed by the most rapid destruction of the nervous substance that ever takes place within the walls of a human skull. "If the right mood is upon you, *you write on;*" in other words, if you have once well lighted your spirit-lamp, it will go on burning so long as any spirit is left in it, for the air is so tranquil that nothing comes to blow it out. You drift into deeper silence and "quicker inspiration." It is just this quicker inspiration that the physician dreads.

Objections to day-work.

Against this objection may be placed the equally serious objection to day-work, that every interruption, when you are particularly anxious not to be interrupted, causes a definite loss and injury to the nervous system. The choice must therefore be made between two dangers, and if they are equally balanced there can be no hesitation, because all the *literary* interests of an author are on the side of the most tranquil time. Literary work is always sure to be much better done when there is no fear of disturbance than under the apprehension of it;

and precisely the same amount of cerebral effort will produce, when the work is uninterrupted, not only better writing, but a much greater quantity of writing. The knowledge that he is working well and productively is an element of health to every workman because it encourages cheerful habits of mind.

Time kept in large masses.

In the division of time it is an excellent rule for adults to keep it as much as possible *in large masses*, not giving a quarter of an hour to one occupation and a quarter to another, but giving three, four, or five hours to one thing at a time.

Children require frequent change.

In the case of children an opposite practice should be followed; they are able to change their attention from one subject to another much more easily than we can, whilst at the same time they cannot fix their minds for very long without cerebral fatigue leading to temporary incapacity. The custom prevalent in schools, of making the boys learn several different things in the course of the day, is therefore founded upon the necessities of the boy-nature, though most grown men would find that changes so frequent would, for them, have all the inconveniences of interruption. To boys they come as relief, to men as interruption. The reason is that the physical condition of the brain is different in the two cases; but in our loose way of talking about these things we may say that the boy's ideas are superficial, like the plates and dishes on the surface of a dinner-table, which may be rapidly changed without inconvenience, whereas the man's ideas, having all struck root down to the very depths of his nature, are more like the plants in a garden, which cannot be removed without temporary loss both of vigour and of beauty, and the loss cannot be instantaneously repaired. For a man to do his work thoroughly well, it is necessary that he should

Boys and men.

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dwell in it long enough at a time to get all the powers of his mind fully under command with reference to the particular work in hand, and he cannot do this without tuning his whole mind to the given diapason, as a tuner tunes a piano. Some men can tune their minds more rapidly, as violins are tuned, and this faculty may to a certain extent be acquired by efforts of the will very frequently repeated. Cuvier had this faculty in the most eminent degree. One of his biographers says: "His extreme facility for study, and of directing all the powers of his mind to diverse occupations of study, from one quarter of an hour to another, was one of the most extraordinary qualities of his mind." The Duke of Wellington also cultivated the habit (inestimably valuable to a public man) of directing the whole of his attention to the subject under consideration, however frequently that subject might happen to be changed. But although men of exceptional power and very exceptional flexibility may do this with apparent impunity, that still depends very much on the nature of the occupation. There are some occupations which are not incompatible with a fragmentary division of time, because these occupations are themselves fragmentary. For example, you may study languages in phrase-books during very small spaces of time, because the complete phrase is in itself a very small thing, but you could not so easily break and resume the thread of an elaborate argument. I suspect that though Cuvier appeared to his contemporaries a man remarkably able to leave off and resume his work at will, he must have taken care to do work that would bear interruption at those times when he knew himself to be most liable to it. And although, when a man's time is unavoidably broken up into fragments, no talent of a

Rapid tuning of the mind.

Cuvier

Wellington.

Choice of occupations.

merely auxiliary kind can be more precious than that of turning each of those fragments to advantage, it is still true that he whose time is at his own disposal will do his work most calmly, most deliberately, and therefore on the whole most thoroughly and perfectly, when he keeps it in fine masses. The mere knowledge that you have three or four clear hours before you is in itself a great help to the spirit of thoroughness, both in study and in production. It is agreeable too, when the sitting has come to an end, to perceive that a definite advance is the result of it, and advance in anything is scarcely perceptible in less than three or four hours.

Utility of masses of time.

There are several pursuits which *cannot* be followed in fragments of time, on account of the necessary preparations. It is useless to begin oil-painting unless you have full time to set your palette properly, to get your canvas into a proper state for working upon, to pose the model as you wish, and settle down to work with everything as it ought to be. In landscape-painting from nature you require the time to go to the selected place, and after your arrival to arrange your materials and shelter yourself from the sun. In scientific pursuits the preparations are usually at least equally elaborate, and often much more so. To prepare for an experiment, or for a dissection, takes time which we feel to be disproportionate when it leaves too little for the scientific work itself. It is for this reason more frequently than for any other that amateurs who begin in enthusiasm, so commonly, after a while, abandon the objects of their pursuit.

Pursuits that cannot be followed in fragments of time.

There is a kind of slavery to which no really intellectual man would ever voluntarily submit, a minute obedience to the clock. Very conscientious people often impose upon themselves this sort of slavery. A person who has

Minute obedience to the clock.

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hampered himself with rules of this kind will take up a certain book, for instance, when the clock strikes nine, and begin at yesterday's mark, perhaps in the middle of a paragraph. Then he will read with great steadiness till a quarter-past nine, and exactly on the instant when the minute-hand gets opposite the dot, he will shut his book, however much the passage may happen to interest him. It was in allusion to good people of this kind that Sir Walter Scott said he had never known a man of genius who could be perfectly regular in his habits, whilst he had known many blockheads who could. It is easy to see that a minute obedience to the clock is unintellectual in its very nature, for the intellect is not a piece of mechanism as a clock is, and cannot easily be made to act like one. There may be perfect correspondence between the locomotives and the clocks on a railway, for if the clocks are pieces of mechanism the locomotives are so likewise, but the intellect always needs a certain looseness and latitude as to time. Very broad rules are the best, such as "Write in the morning, read in the afternoon, see friends in the evening," or else "Study one day and produce another alternately," or even "Work one week and see the world another week alternately."

Books of agenda.

There is a fretting habit, much recommended by men of business and of great use to them, of writing the evening before the duties of the day in a book of agenda. If this is done at all by intellectual men with reference to their pursuits, it ought to be done in a very broad, loose way, never minutely. An intellectual worker ought never to make it a matter of conscience (in intellectual labour) to do a predetermined quantity of little things. This sort of conscientiousness frets and worries, and is the enemy of all serenity of thought.

PART XI.

TRADES AND PROFESSIONS.

LETTER I.

TO A YOUNG GENTLEMAN OF ABILITY AND CULTURE WHO HAD NOT DECIDED ABOUT HIS PROFESSION.

The Church—Felicities and advantages of the clerical profession—Its elevated ideal—That it is favourable to noble studies—French priests and English clergymen—The professional point of view—Difficulty of disinterested thinking—Coloured light—Want of strict accuracy—Quotation from a sermon—The drawback to the clerical life—Provisional nature of intellectual conclusions—The legal profession—That it affords gratification to the intellectual powers—Want of intellectual disinterestedness in lawyers—Their absorption in professional life—Anecdote of a London lawyer—Superiority of lawyers in their sense of affairs—Medicine—The study of it a fine preparation for the intellectual life Social rise of medical men coincident with the mental progress of communities—Their probable future influence on education—The heroic side of their profession—The military and naval professions—Bad effect of the privation of solitude—Interruption—Anecdote of Cuvier—The fine arts—In what way they are favourable to thought—Intellectual leisure of artists—Reasoning artists—Sciences included in the fine arts.

It may be taken for granted that to a mind constituted as yours is, no profession will be satisfactory which does not afford free play to the intellectual powers. You

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might no doubt exercise resolution enough to bind yourself down to uncongenial work for a term of years, but it would be with the intention of retiring as soon as you had realized a competency. The happiest life is that which constantly exercises and educates what is best in us.

Felicities and advantages of holy orders.

You had thoughts, at one time, of the Church, and the Church would have suited you in many respects very happily, yet not, I think, in all respects. The clerical profession has many great felicities and advantages: it educates and develops, by its mild but regular discipline, much of our higher nature; it sets before us an elevated ideal, worth striving for at the cost of every sacrifice but one, of which I intend to say something farther on; and it offers just that mixture of public and private life which best affords the alternation of activity and rest. It is an existence in many respects most favourable to the noblest studies. It offers the happiest combination of duties that satisfy the conscience with leisure for the cultivation of the mind; it gives the easiest access to all classes of society, providing for the parson himself a neutral and independent position, so safe that he need only conduct himself properly to preserve it. How superior, from the intellectual point of view, is this liberal existence to the narrower

French priests.

one of a French *curé de campagne!* I certainly think that if a good *curé* has an exceptional genius for sanctity, his chances of becoming a perfect saint are better than those of a comfortable English incumbent, who is at the same time a gentleman and man of the world, but he is not nearly so well situated for leading the intellectual

The English clergy.

life. Our own clergy have a sort of middle position between the *curé* and the layman, which, without at all interfering with their spiritual vocation, makes them

better judges of the character of laymen and more completely in sympathy with it.

And yet, although the life of a clergyman is favourable to culture in many ways, it is not wholly favourable to it. There exists, in clerical thinking generally, just one restriction or impediment, which is the overwhelming importance of the professional point of view. Of all the professions the ecclesiastical one is that which most decidedly and most constantly affects the judgment of persons and opinions. It is peculiarly difficult for a clergyman to attain disinterestedness in his thinking, to accept truth just as it may happen to present itself, without passionately desiring that one doctrine may turn out to be strong in evidence and another unsupported. And so we find the clergy, as a class, anxious rather to discover aids to faith, than the simple scientific truth; and the more the special priestly character develops itself, the more we find them disposed to use their intellects for the triumph of principles that are decided upon beforehand. Sometimes this disposition leads them to see the acts of laymen in a coloured light and to speak of them without strict accuracy. Here is an example of what I mean. A Jesuit priest preached a sermon in London very recently, in which he said that "in Germany, France, Italy, and England, gigantic efforts were being made to rob Christian children of the blessing of a Christian education." "Herod, though dead," the preacher continued, "has left his mantle behind him; and I wish that the soldiers of Herod in those countries would plunge their swords into the breasts of little children while they were innocent, rather than have their souls destroyed by means of an unchristian and uncatholic education." No doubt this is very earnest and

Influence of the clerical profession on the judgment

Coloured light.

Extract from a sermon.

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sincere, but it is not accurate and just thinking. The laity in the countries the preacher mentioned have certainly a strong tendency to exclude theology from State schools, because it is so difficult for a modern State to impose any kind of theological teaching without injustice to minorities; but the laity do not desire to deprive children of whatever instruction may be given to them by the clergy of their respective communions. May I add, that to the mind of a layman it seems a sanguinary desire that all little children should have swords plunged into their breasts rather than be taught in schools not clerically directed? The exact truth is, that the powerful lay element is certainly separating itself from the ecclesiastical element all over Europe, because it is found by experience that the two have a great and increasing difficulty in working harmoniously together, but the ecclesiastical element is detached and not destroyed. The quotation I have just made is in itself a sufficient illustration of that very peculiarity in the more exalted ecclesiastical temperament, which often makes it so difficult for priests and governments, in these times, to get on comfortably together. Here is first a very inaccurate statement, and then an outburst of most passionate feeling, whereas the intellect desires the strictest truth and the most complete disinterestedness. As the temper of the laity becomes more and more intellectual (and that is the direction of its movement), the sacerdotal habit will become more and more remote from it.

Feeling of the laity.

The ecclesiastical temperament.

The clerical life has many strong attractions for the intellectual, and just one drawback to counterbalance them. It offers tranquillity, shelter from the interruptions and anxieties of the more active professions, and

powerful means of influence ready to hand; but it is compatible with intellectual freedom and with the satisfaction of the conscience, only just so long as the priest really remains a believer in the details of his religion. Now, although we may reasonably hope to retain the chief elements of our belief, although what a man believes at twenty-five is always what he will most probably believe at fifty, still, in an age when free inquiry is the common habit of cultivated people of our sex, we may well hesitate before taking upon ourselves any formal engagement for the future, especially in matters of detail. The intellectual spirit does not regard its conclusions as being at any time final, but always provisional; we hold what we believe to be the truth until we can replace it by some more perfect truth, but cannot tell how much of to-day's beliefs to-morrow will retain or reject. It may be observed, however, that the regular performance of priestly functions is in itself a great help to permanence in belief by connecting it closely with practical habit, so that the clergy do really and honestly often retain through life their hold on early beliefs which as laymen they might have lost.

Difficulty of engagements for the future.

The profession of the law provides ample opportunities for a critical intellect with a strong love of accuracy and a robust capacity for hard work, besides which it is the best of worldly educations. Some lawyers love their work as passionately as artists do theirs, others dislike it very heartily, most of them seem to take it as a simple business to be done for daily bread. Lawyers whose heart is in their work are invariably men of superior ability, which proves that there is something in it that affords gratification to the intellectual powers. However, in speaking of lawyers, I feel ignorant and on the outside, because

The legal profession.

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their profession is one of which the interior feelings can be known to no one who has not practised. One thing seems clear, they get the habit of employing the whole strength and energy of their minds for especial and temporary ends, the purpose being the service of the client, certainly not the revelation of pure truth. Hence, although they become very acute, and keen judges of that side of human nature which they habitually see (not the best side), they are not more disinterested than clergymen.[1] Sometimes they take up some study outside of their profession and follow it disinterestedly, but this is rare. A busy lawyer is much more likely than a clergyman to become entirely absorbed in his professional life, because it requires so much more intellectual exertion. I remember asking a very clever lawyer who lived in London, whether he ever visited an exhibition of pictures, and he answered me by the counter-inquiry whether I had read Chitty on Contracts, Collier on Partnerships, Taylor on Evidence, Cruse's Digest, or Smith's Mercantile Law? This seemed to me at the time a good instance of the way a professional habit may narrow one's views of things, for these law-books were written for lawyers alone, whilst the picture exhibitions were intended for the public generally. My friend's answer would have been more to the point if I had inquired whether he had read Linton on Colours, and Burnet on Chiaroscuro.

Lawyers.

Often absorbed in business.

A London lawyer.

There is just one situation in which we all may feel for a short time as lawyers feel habitually. Suppose that two inexperienced players sit down to a game of chess, and that each is backed by a clever person who is

[1] The word "disinterested" is used here in the sense explained in Part II. Letter III.

constantly giving him hints. The two backers represent the lawyers, and the players represent their clients. There is not much disinterested thought in a situation of this kind, but there is a strong stimulus to acuteness.

Lawyers, their sense of affairs.

I think that lawyers are often superior to philosophers in their sense of what is relatively important in human affairs with reference to limited spaces of time, such as half a century. They especially know the enormous importance of custom, which the speculative mind very readily forgets, and they have in the highest degree that peculiar sense which fits men for dealing with others in the affairs of ordinary life. In this respect they are remarkably superior to clergymen, and superior also to artists and men of science.

Medicine, its suitableness as a profession for the intellectual

The profession of medicine is, of all fairly lucrative professions, the one best suited to the development of the intellectual life. Having to deal continually with science, being constantly engaged in following and observing the operation of natural laws, it produces a sense of the working of those laws which prepares the mind for bold and original speculation, and a reliance upon their unfailing regularity, which gives it great firmness and assurance. A medical education is the best possible preparation for philosophical pursuits, because it gives them a solid basis in the ascertainable. The estimation in which these studies are held is an accurate meter of the intellectual advancement of a community. When the priest is reverenced as a being above ordinary humanity, and the physician slightly esteemed, the condition of society is sure to be that of comparative ignorance and barbarism; and it is one of several signs which indicate barbarian feeling in our own aristocracy, that it has a contempt for the study of medi-

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cine. The progress of society towards enlightenment is marked by the steady social rise of the surgeon and the physician, a rise which still continues, even in Western Europe. It is probable that before very long the medical profession will exercise a powerful influence upon general education, and take an active share in it. There are very strong reasons for the opinion that schoolmasters educated in medicine would be peculiarly well qualified to train both body and mind for a vigorous and active manhood. An immense advantage, even from the intellectual point of view, in the pursuit of medicine and surgery, is that they supply a discipline in mental heroism. Other professions do this also, but not to the same degree. The combination of an accurate training in positive science with the habitual contempt of danger and contemplation of suffering and death, is the finest possible preparation for noble studies and arduous discoveries. I ought to add, however, that medical men in the provinces, when they have not any special enthusiasm for their work. seem peculiarly liable to the deadening influences of routine, and easily fall behind their age. The medical periodicals provide the best remedy for this.

Medical influence on education.

Heroism of the medical profession.

Routine.

Military and naval professions.

The military and naval professions are too active, and too much bound to obedience in their activity, for the highest intellectual pursuits; but their greatest evil in this respect is the continual privation of solitude, and the frequency of interruption. A soldier's life in the higher ranks, when there is great responsibility and the necessity for personal decision, undoubtedly leads to the most brilliant employment of the mental powers, and develops a manliness of character which is often of the greatest use in intellectual work; so that a man of science

may find his force augmented, and better under control, for having passed through a military experience; but the life of barracks and camps is destructive to continuity of thinking. The incompatibility becomes strikingly manifest when we reflect how impossible it would have been for Ney or Massena to do the work of Cuvier or Comte. Cuvier even declined to accompany the expedition to Egypt, notwithstanding the prospects of advantage that it offered. The reason he gave for this refusal was, that he could do more for science in the tranquillity of the Jardin des Plantes. He was a strict economist of time, and dreaded the loss of it involved in following an army, even though his mission would have been purely scientific. How much more would Cuvier have dreaded the interruptions of a really military existence! It is these interruptions, and not any want of natural ability, that are the true explanation of the intellectual poverty which characterizes the military profession. Of all the liberal professions it is the least studious.

Cuvier: his refusal to go to Egypt.

Let me say a word in conclusion about the practical pursuit of the fine arts. Painters are often remarkable for pleasant conversational power, and a degree of intelligence strikingly superior to their literary culture. This is because the processes of their art can be followed, at least under certain circumstances, by the exercise of hand and eye, directed merely by artistic taste and experience, whilst the intellect is left free either for reflection or conversation. Rubens liked to be read to when he painted; many artists like to hear people talk, and to take a share occasionally in the conversation. The truth is that artists, even when they work very assiduously, do in fact enjoy great spaces of intellectual leisure, and often profit by them. Painting itself is also a fine discipline

Painters: their intelligence.

Rubens.

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Intellectual artists.

for some of the best faculties of the mind, though it is well known that the most gifted artists think least about their art. Still there is a large class of painters, including many eminent ones, who *proceed intellectually* in the execution of their works, who reason them out philosophically step by step, and exercise a continual criticism upon their manual labour as it goes forward. I find, as I know art and artists better, that this class is more numerous than is commonly suspected, and that the charming effects which we believe to be the result of pure inspiration have often been elaborately reasoned out like a problem in mathematics. We are very apt to forget that art includes a great science, the science of natural appearances, and that the technical work of painters and engravers cannot go forward safely without the profoundest knowledge of certain delicate materials, this being also a science, and a difficult one. The common tendency is to underrate (from ignorance) what is intellectual in the practice of the fine arts; and yet the artists of past times have left evidence enough that they thought about art, and thought deeply. Artists are often illiterate; but it is possible to be at the same time illiterate and intellectual; as we see frequent examples of book-learning in people who have scarcely a single idea of their own.

Art includes two sciences.

LETTER II.

TO A YOUNG GENTLEMAN WHO HAD LITERARY AND ARTISTIC TASTES, BUT NO PROFESSION.

The world only recognizes performance—Uselessness of botch-work—Vastness of the interval between botch-work and handicraft—Delusions of the well-to-do—Quotation from Charles Lever—Indifference, and even contempt, for skill—Moral contempt for skill—The contempt which comes from the pride of knowledge—Intellectual value of skill and of professional discipline.

IT is not a graceful thing for me to say, nor pleasant for you to hear, that what you have done hitherto in art and literature is neither of any value in itself nor likely to lead you to that which is truly and permanently satisfying. I believe you have natural ability, though it would not be easy for any critic to measure its degree when it has never been developed by properly-directed work. Most critics would probably err on the unfavourable side, for we are easily blind to powers that are little more than latent. To see anything encouraging in your present performance, it would need the sympathy and intelligence of the American sculptor Greenough, of whom it was said that "his recognition was not limited to achievement, but extended to latent powers." The world, however, recognizes nothing short of performance, because the performance is what it needs, and promises are of no use to it.

Greenough, the American sculptor.

In this rough justice of the world there is a natural distribution of rewards. You will be paid, in fame and money, for all excellent work; and you will be paid in money, though not in fame, for all work that is even simply good, provided it be of a kind that the world

Rewards for work

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needs, or fancies that it needs. But you will never be paid at all for botch-work, neither in money nor in fame, nor by your own inward approval.

For we all of us either know that our botch-work is worthless, or else have serious misgivings about it. That which is less commonly realized by those who have not undergone the test of professional labour is the vastness of the interval that separates botch-work from handicraft, and the difficulty of getting over it. "There are few delusions," Charles Lever said in "The Bramleighs," "more common with well-to-do people than the belief that if 'put to it' they could earn their own livelihood in a variety of ways. Almost every man has some two or three or more accomplishments which he fancies would be quite adequate to his support; and remembering with what success the exercise of these gifts has ever been hailed in the society of his friends, he has a sort of generous dislike to be obliged to eclipse some poor drudge of a professional, who, of course, will be consigned to utter oblivion after his own performance. Augustus Bramleigh was certainly not a conceited or a vain man, and yet he had often in his palmy days imagined how easy it would be for him to provide for his own support. He was something of a musician; he sang pleasingly; he drew a little; he knew something of three or four modern languages; he had that sort of smattering acquaintance with questions of religion, politics, and literature which the world calls being 'well-informed,' and yet nothing short of the grave necessity revealed to him that towards the object of securing a livelihood a cobbler in his bulk was out-and-out his master. The world has no need of the man of small acquirements, and would rather have its shoes mended

Interval between botch-work and handicraft.

Delusions of the well-to-do.

Augustus Bramleigh.

by the veriest botch of a professional than by the cleverest amateur that ever studied a Greek sandal."

Something of this illusion, which Charles Lever has touched so truly, may be due to a peculiarity of the English mind in its present (not quite satisfactory) stage of development, a peculiarity which I am not the first to point out, since it has been already indicated by Mr. Poynter, the distinguished artist; and I think that this peculiarity is to be found in very great force, perhaps in greater force than elsewhere, in that well-to-do English middle class in which you have been born and educated. It consists in a sort of indifference to skill of all kinds, which passes into something not very far from active contempt when a call is made for attention, recognition, admiration. The source of this feeling will probably be found in the inordinate respect for wealth, between which and highly developed personal skill, in anything, there is a certain antagonism or incompatibility. The men of real skill are almost always men who earn their living by their skill. The feeling of the middle-class capitalist concerning the skilful man may be expressed, not unjustly, as follows: "Yes, he is very clever; he may well be clever—it is his trade; he gets his living by it." This is held to exonerate us from the burden of admiration, and there is not any serious interest in the achievements of human endeavour as evidence of the marvellous natural endowments and capabilities of the human organism. In some minds the indifference to skill is more active and grows into very real, though not openly expressed, contempt. This contempt is partly moral. The skilful man always rejoices in his skill with a heaven-bestowed joy and delight—one of the purest and most divine pleasures given by God to man—an en-

Indifference to skill.

Its source.

Contempt for skill.

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couragement to labour, and a reward, the best reward, after his arduous apprenticeship. But there is a sour and severe spirit, hating all innocent pleasures, which despises the gladness of the skilful as so much personal vanity.

Contempt for skill due to pride of knowledge.

There is also the contempt for skill which comes from the pride of knowledge. To attain skill *in* anything a degree of application is necessary which absorbs more time than the acquisition of knowledge *about* the thing, so that the remarkably skilful man is not likely to be the erudite man. There have been instances of men who possessed both skill and learning. The American sculptor Greenough, and the English painter Dyce, were at the same time both eminently skilful in their craft and eminently learned out of it; but the combination is very rare. Therefore the possession of skill has come to be considered presumptive evidence of a want of general information.

Skill is knowledge tested and perfected.

But the truth is that professional skill is knowledge tested and perfected by practical application, and therefore has a great intellectual value. Professional life is to private individuals what active warfare is to a military state. It brings to light every deficiency, and reveals our truest needs. And therefore it seems to me a matter for regret that you should pass your existence in irresponsible privacy, and not have your attainments tested by the exigencies of some professional career. The discipline which such a career affords, and which no private resolution can ever adequately replace, may be all that is wanting to your development.

LETTER III.

TO A YOUNG GENTLEMAN WHO WISHED TO DEVOTE HIMSELF TO LITERATURE AS A PROFESSION.

Byron's vexation at the idea of poetry being considered a profession —Buffon could not bear to be called a naturalist—Cuvier would not be called a Hellenist—Faraday's life not professional—The intellectual life frequently protected by professions outside of it —Professional work ought to be plain business work—Michelet's account of the incubation of a book—Necessity for too great rapidity of production in professional literature—It does not pay to do your best—Journalism and magazine-writing—Illustration from a sister art—Privilege of an author to be allowed to write little.

The profession of poetry. Byron's dislike of the term.

Do you remember how put out Byron was when some reviewer spoke of Wordsworth as being "at the head of the profession"? Byron's vexation was not entirely due to jealousy of Wordsworth, though that may have had something to do with it, nor was it due either to an aristocratic dislike of being in a "profession" himself, though this feeling may have had a certain influence; it was due to a proper sense of the dignity of the intellectual life. Buffon could not bear to be called a "naturalist," and Cuvier in the same way disliked the title of Hellenist, because it sounded professional: he said that though he knew more Greek than all the Academy he was not a Hellenist as Gail was, because he did not live by Greek.

Buffon. Cuvier.

Now, if this feeling had arisen merely from a dislike to having it supposed that one is obliged to earn his own living, it would have been a contemptibly vulgar sentiment, whoever professed it. Nothing can be more

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honourable to a man than to earn his bread by honest industry of any kind, whether it be manual or intellectual, and still I feel with Byron, and Buffon, and Cuvier, that the great instruments of the world's intellectual culture ought not to be, in the ordinary sense, professions. Byron said that poetry, as he understood it, was "an art, an attribute," but not what is understood by a "profession." Surely the same is true of all the highest intellectual work, in whatever kind. You could scarcely consider Faraday's life to be what is commonly understood by a professional life. Tyndall says that if Faraday had chosen to employ his talents in analytical chemistry he might have realized a fortune of 150,000*l.* Now that would have been a professional existence; but the career which Faraday chose (happily for science) was not professional, but intellectual. The distinction between the professional and the intellectual lives is perfectly clear in my own mind, and therefore I ought to be able to express it clearly. Let me make the attempt.

Faraday's life not professional

Professions, purpose of.

The purpose of a profession, of a profession pure and simple, is to turn knowledge and talent to pecuniary profit. On the other hand, the purpose of cultivated men, or men of genius, who work in an unprofessional spirit, is to increase knowledge, or make it more accurate, or else simply to give free exercise to high faculties which demand it. The distinction is so clear and trenchant that most intellectual men, whose private fortunes are not large, prefer to have a profession distinct from their higher intellectual work, in order to secure the perfect independence of the latter. Mr. Smiles, in his valuable book on "Character," gives a list of eminent intellectual men who have pursued real professional avocations of various kinds separately from their literary or scientific

activity, and he mentions an observation of Gifford's which is much to my present purpose :—"Gifford, the editor of the *Quarterly*, who knew the drudgery of writing for a living, once observed that 'a single hour of composition, won from the business of the day, is worth more than the whole day's toil of him who works at the trade of literature: in the one case, the spirit comes joyfully to refresh itself, like a hart to the water-brooks; in the other, it pursues its miserable way, panting and jaded, with the dogs of hunger and necessity behind.'" So Coleridge said that "three hours of leisure, unalloyed by any alien anxiety, and looked forward to with delight as a change and recreation, will suffice to realize in literature a larger product of what is truly genial than weeks of compulsion." Coleridge's idea of a profession was, that it should be "some regular employment which could be carried on so far mechanically, that an average quantum only of health, spirits, and intellectual exertion are requisite to its faithful discharge." Without in the least desiring to undervalue good professional work of any kind, I may observe that, to be truly professional, it ought to be always at command, and therefore that the average power of the man's intellect, not his rare flashes of highest intellectual illumination, ought to suffice for it. Professional work ought always to be plain business work, requiring knowledge and skill, but not any effort of genius. For example, in medicine, it is professional work to prescribe a dose or amputate a limb, but not to discover the nervous system or the circulation of the blood.

The trade of literature.

Coleridge.

His idea of a profession.

Professional work.

If literature paid sufficiently well to allow it, a literary man might very wisely consider *study* to be his profession, and not production. He would then study regularly, say,

Study.

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six hours a day, and write when he had something to say, and really wanted to express it. His book, when it came out, would have had time to be properly hatched, and would probably have natural life in it. Michelet says of one of his books: "Cette œuvre a du moins le caractère d'être venue comme vient toute vraie création vivante. Elle s'est faite à la chaleur d'une douce incubation."[1] It would be impossible, in so short a space, to give a more accurate description of the natural manner in which a book comes into existence. A book ought always to be "fait à la chaleur d'une douce incubation."

Incubation.

But when you make a profession of literature this is what you can hardly ever get leave to do. Literary men require to see something of the world; they can hardly be hermits, and the world cannot be seen without a constant running expenditure, which at the end of the year represents an income. Men of culture and refinement really *cannot* live like very poor people without deteriorating in refinement, and falling behind in knowledge of the world. When they are married, and have families, they can hardly let their families live differently from themselves; so that there are the usual expenses of the English professional classes to be met, and these are heavy when they have to be got out of the profits of literature. The consequence is, that if a book is to be written prudently it must be written quickly, and with the least amount of preparatory labour that can possibly be made to serve. This is very different from the "*douce incubation*" of Michelet. Goldsmith said of hack-writing, that it was

Book-making.

Hack-writing.

[1] "This work has at any rate the character of having come into the world like every really living creation. It has been produced by the heat of a gentle incubation."

difficult to imagine a combination more prejudicial to taste than that of the author whose interest it is to write as much as possible, and the bookseller, whose interest it is to pay as little as possible. The condition of authors has no doubt greatly improved since Goldsmith's time, but still the fact remains that the most careful and finished writing, requiring extensive preparatory study, is a luxury in which the professional writer can only indulge himself at great risk. Careful writing does, no doubt, occasionally pay for the time it costs; but such writing is more commonly done by men who are either independent by fortune, or who make themselves, as authors, independent by the pursuit of some other profession, than by regular men of letters whose whole income is derived from their inkstands. And when, by way of exception, the hack-writer does produce very highly-finished and concentrated work, based upon an elaborate foundation of hard study, that work is seldom professional in the strictest sense, but is a labour of love, outside the hasty journalism or magazine-writing that wins his daily bread. In cases of this kind it is clear that the best work is not done as a regular part of professional duty, and that the author might as well earn his bread in some other calling, if he still had the same amount of leisure for the composition of real literature.

Finished writing.

The fault I find with writing as a profession is that *it does not pay to do your best.* I don't mean to insinuate that downright slovenly or careless work is the most profitable; but I do mean to say that any high degree of conscientiousness, especially in the way of study and research, is a direct injury to the professional writer's purse. Suppose, for example, that he is engaged in reviewing a book, and is to get 3*l.* 10*s.* for the review

Evil of professional authorship.

Difficulty of study and research.

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Difficulty of thoroughness for hack-writers.

when it is written. If by the accident of previous accumulation his knowledge is already fully equal to the demand upon it, the review may be written rapidly, and the day's work will have been a profitable one; but if, on the other hand, it is necessary to consult several authorities, to make some laborious researches, then the reviewer is placed in a dilemma between literary thoroughness and duty to his family. He cannot spend a week in reading up a subject for the sum of 3*l.* 10*s.* Is it not much easier to string together a few phrases which will effectually hide his ignorance from everybody but the half-dozen enthusiasts who have mastered the subject of the book? It is strange that the professional pursuit of literature should be a direct discouragement to study; yet it is so. There *are* hack-writers who study, and they deserve much honour for doing so, since the temptations the other way are always so pressing and immediate. Sainte-Beuve was a true student, loving literature for its own sake, and preparing for his articles with a diligence rare in the profession. But he was scarcely a hack-writer, having a modest independency, and living besides with the quiet frugality of a bachelor.

Discouragement to study.

Sainte-Beuve a true student.

The truth seems to be that literature of the highest kind can only in the most exceptional cases be made a profession, yet that a skilful writer may use his pen professionally if he chooses. The production of the printed talk of the day *is* a profession, requiring no more than average ability, and the tone and temper of ordinary educated men. The outcome of it is journalism and magazine-writing; and now let me say a word or two about these.

Printed talk.

Journalism.

The highest kind of journalism is very well done in England; the men who do it are often either highly

educated, or richly gifted by nature, or both. The practice of journalism is useful to an author in giving him a degree of readiness and rapidity, a skill in turning his materials to immediate account, and a power of presenting one or two points effectively, which may often be valuable in literature of a more permanent order. The danger of it may be illustrated by a reference to a sister art. I was in the studio of an English landscape-painter when some pictures arrived from an artist in the country to go along with his own to one of the exhibitions. They were all very pretty and very clever—indeed, so clever were they, that their cleverness was almost offensive—and so long as they were looked at by themselves, the brilliance of them was rather dazzling. But the instant they were placed by the side of thoroughly careful and earnest work, it became strikingly evident that they had been painted hastily, and would be almost immediately exhausted by the purchaser. Now these pictures were the *journalism of painting;* and my friend told me that when once an artist has got into the habit of doing hasty work like that, he seldom acquires better habits afterwards.

Parallel between painting and journalism.

Professional writers who follow journalism for its immediate profits, are liable in like manner to retain the habit of diffuseness in literature which ought to be more finished and more concentrated. Therefore, although journalism is a good teacher of promptitude and decision, it often spoils a hand for higher literature by incapacitating it for perfect finish; and it is better for a writer who has ambition to write little, *but always his best*, than to dilute himself in daily columns. One of the greatest privileges which an author can aspire to is *to be allowed to write little*, and that is a privilege which the professional

Effects of journalism on literary composition.

PART XI. LETTER III.

writer does not enjoy, except in such rare instances as that of Tennyson, whose careful finish is as prudent in the professional sense as it is satisfactory to the scrupulous fastidiousness of the artist.

LETTER IV.

LETTER IV.

TO AN ENERGETIC AND SUCCESSFUL COTTON MANUFACTURER.

Two classes in their lower grades inevitably hostile—The spiritual and temporal powers—The functions of both not easily exercised by the same person—Humboldt, Faraday, Livingstone—The difficulty about time—Limits to the energy of the individual—Jealousy between the classes—That this jealousy ought not to exist—Some of the sciences based upon an industrial development—The work of the intellectual class absolutely necessary in a highly civilized community—That it grows in numbers and influence side by side with the industrial class.

OUR last conversation together, in the privacy of your splendid new drawing-room after the guests had gone away and the music had ceased for the night, left me under the impression that we had not arrived at a perfect understanding of each other. This was due in a great measure to my unfortunate incapacity for expressing anything exactly by spoken words. The constant habit of writing, which permits a leisurely selection from one's ideas, is often very unfavourable to readiness in conversation. Will you permit me, then, to go over the ground we traversed, this time in my own way, pen in hand?

Two classes

We represent, you and I, two classes which in their lower grades are inevitably hostile; but the superior members of these classes ought not to feel any hostility, since both are equally necessary to the world. We are,

Spiritual and temporal powers.

in truth, the spiritual and the temporal powers in their most modern form. The chief of industry and the man of letters stand to-day in the same relation to each other and to mankind as the baron and bishop of the Middle Ages. We are not recognized, either of us, by formally conferred titles, we are both held to be somewhat intrusive by the representatives of a former order of things, and there is, or was until very lately, a certain disposition to deny what we consider our natural rights; but we know that our powers are not to be resisted, and we have the inward assurance that the forces of nature are with us.

Misunderstanding between the two.

This, with reference to the outer world. But there is a want of clearness in the relation between ourselves. You understand your great temporal function, which is the wise direction of the industry of masses, the accumulation and distribution of wealth; but you do not so clearly understand the spiritual function of the intellectual class, and you do not think of it quite justly. This want of understanding is called by some of us your Philistinism. Will you permit me to explain what the intellectual class thinks of you, and what is its opinion about itself?

Pray excuse any appearance of presumption on my part if I say we of the intellectual class and you of the industrial. My position is something like that of the clergyman who reads, "Let him come to me or to some other learned and discreet minister of God's word," thereby calling himself learned and discreet. It is a simple matter of fact that I belong to the intellectual class, since I lead its life, just as it is a fact that you have a quarter of a million of money.

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First, I want to show that the existence of my class is necessary.

Want of time the chief impediment to culture.

Although men in various occupations often acquire a considerable degree of culture outside their trade, the highest results of culture can scarcely ever be attained by men whose time is taken up in earning a fortune. Every man has but a limited flow of mental energy per day; and if this is used up in an industrial leadership, he cannot do much more in the intellectual sphere than simply ascertain what has been done by others. Now, although we have a certain respect, and the respect is just, for those who know what others have accomplished, it is

Need of discoverers.

clear that if no one did more than this, if no one made any fresh discoveries, the world would make no progress whatever; and in fact, if nobody ever had been dedicated to intellectual pursuits in preceding ages, the men who only learn what others have done, would in these days have had nothing to learn. Past history proves the immensity of the debt which the world owes to men who gave their whole time and attention to intellectual pursuits; and if the existences of these men could be eliminated from the past of the human race, its present would be very different from what it is. A list has been published of men who have done much good work in the intervals of

Intellectual pioneers.

business, but still the fact remains that the great intellectual pioneers were absorbed and devoted men, scorning wealth so far as it affected themselves, and ready to endure everything for knowledge beyond the knowledge of their times. Instances of such enthusiasm abound, an enthusiasm fully justified by the value of the results

Humboldt.

which it has achieved. When Alexander Humboldt sold his inheritance to have the means for his great journey in South America, and calmly dedicated the whole of a

long life, and the strength of a robust constitution, to the advancement of natural knowledge, he acted foolishly indeed, if years, and strength, and fortune are given to us only to be well invested in view of money returns; but the world has profited by his decision. Faraday gave up the whole of his time to discovery when he might have earned a large fortune by the judicious investment of his extraordinary skill in chemistry. Livingstone has sacrificed everything to the pursuit of his great work in Africa. Lives such as these—and many resemble them in useful devotion of which we hear much less—are clearly not compatible with much money-getting. A decent existence, free from debt, is all that such men ought to be held answerable for.

Faraday.

Livingstone

I have taken two or three leading instances, but there is quite a large class of intellectual people who cannot in the nature of things serve society effectively in their own way without being quite outside of the industrial life. There is a real incompatibility between some pursuits and others. I suspect that you would have been a good general, for you are a born leader and commander of men; but it would have been difficult to unite a regular military career with strict personal attention to your factories. We often find the same difficulty in our intellectual pursuits. We are not always quite so unpractical as you think we are; but the difficulty is how to find the time, and how to arrange it so as not to miss two or three distinct classes of opportunities. We are not all of us exactly imbeciles in money matters, though the pecuniary results of our labours seem no doubt pitiful enough. There is a tradition that a Greek philosopher, who was suspected by the practical men of his day of incapacity for affairs, devoted a year to prove the con-

Incompatibility between pursuits.

Tradition of a Greek philosopher

trary, and traded so judiciously that he amassed thereby great riches. It may be doubtful whether he could do it in one year, but many a fine intellectual capacity has overshadowed a fine practical capacity in the same head by the withdrawal of time and effort.

Separation of the intellectual and industrial functions.

It is because the energies of one man are so limited, and there is so little time in a single human life, that the intellectual and industrial functions must, *in their highest development*, be separated. No one man could unite in his own person your life and Humboldt's, though it is possible that he might have the natural capacity for both. Grant us, then, the liberty *not* to earn very much money; and this being once granted, try to look upon our intellectual superiority as a simple natural fact, just as we look upon your pecuniary superiority.

In saying in this plain way that we are intellectually superior to you and your class, I am guilty of no more pride and vanity than you when you affirm or display your wealth. The fact is there, in its simplicity. We have culture because we have paid the twenty or thirty years of labour which are the price of culture, just as you have great factories and estates which are the reward of your life's patient and intelligent endeavour.

Culture and its price.

Jealousy between the industrial and the intellectual classes.

Why should there be any narrow jealousy between us; why any contempt on the one side or the other? Each has done his appointed work, each has caused to fructify the talent which the Master gave.

Yet a certain jealousy *does* exist, if not between you and me personally, at least between our classes. The men who have culture without wealth are jealous of the power and privileges of those who possess money without culture; and on the other hand, the men whose time has been too entirely absorbed by commercial pursuits

to leave them any margin sufficient to do justice to their intellectual powers, are often painfully sensitive to the contempt of the cultivated, and strongly disposed, from jealousy, to undervalue culture itself. Both are wrong so far as they indulge any unworthy and unreasonable feeling of this kind. The existence of the two classes is necessary to an advanced civilization. The science of accumulating and administrating material wealth, of which you yourself are a great practical master, is the foundation of the material prosperity of nations, and it is only when this prosperity is fully assured to great numbers that the arts and sciences can develop themselves in perfect liberty and with the tranquil assurance of their own permanence. The advancement of material well-being in modern states tends so directly to the advancement of intellectual pursuits, even when the makers of fortunes are themselves indifferent to this result, that it ought always to be a matter of congratulation for the intellectual class itself, which needs the support of a great public with leisure to read and think. It is easy to show how those arts and sciences which our class delights to cultivate are built upon those developments of industry which have been brought about by the energy of yours. Suppose the case of a scientific chemist: the materials for his experiments are provided ready to his hand by the industrial class; the record of them is preserved on paper manufactured by the same industrial class; and the public which encourages him by its attention is usually found in great cities which are maintained by the labours of the same useful servants of humanity. It is possible, no doubt, in these modern times, that some purely pastoral or agricultural community might produce a great chemist, because a man of inborn scientific genius who came into

Arts and sciences based upon industry.

Chemistry.

PART XI. LETTER IV.

the world in an agricultural country might in these days get his books and materials from industrial centres at a distance, but his work would still be based on the industrial life of others. No pastoral or agricultural community which was really isolated from industrial communities ever produced a chemist. And now consider how enormously important this one science of chemistry has proved itself even to our intellectual life! Several other sciences have been either greatly strengthened or else altogether renewed by it, and the wonderful photographic processes have been for nature and the fine arts what printing was for literature, placing reliable and authentic materials for study within the reach of everyone. Literature itself has profited by the industrial progress of the present age, in the increased cheapness of everything that is material in books. I please myself with the reflection that even you make paper cheaper by manufacturing so much cotton.

Pastoral and agricultural communities.

Value of chemistry.

All these are reasons why we ought not to be jealous of you; and now permit me to indicate a few other reasons why it is unreasonable on your part to feel any jealousy of us.

Effects of the abolition of literary men.

Suppose we were to cease working to-morrow—cease working, I mean, in our peculiar ways—and all of us become colliers and factory operatives instead, with nobody to supply our places. Or, since you may possibly be of opinion that there is enough literature and science in the world at the present day, suppose rather that at some preceding date the whole literary and scientific and artistic labour of the human race; had come suddenly to a standstill. Mind, I do not say of Englishmen merely, but of the whole race, for if any intellectual work had been done in France or Germany, or even in Japan, you

Services continually rendered by literary men.

would have imported it like cotton and foreign cereals. Well, I have no hesitation in telling you that although there was a good deal of literature and science in England before the 1st of January, 1800, the present condition of the nation would have been a very chaotic condition if the intellectual class had ceased on that day to think and observe and to place on record its thoughts and observations. The life of a progressive nation cannot long go forward exclusively on the thinking of the past: its thoughtful men must not be all dead men, but living men who accompany it on its course. It is they who make clear the lessons of experience; it is they who discover the reliable general laws upon which all safe action must be founded in the future; it is they who give decision to human action in every direction by constantly registering, in language of comprehensive accuracy, both its successes and its failures. It is their great and arduous labour which makes knowledge accessible to men of action at the cost of little effort and the smallest possible expenditure of time. The intellectual class grows in numbers and in influence along with the numbers and influence of the materially productive population of the State. And not only are the natural philosophers, the writers of contemporary and past history, the discoverers in science, *necessary* in the strictest sense to the life of such a community as the modern English community, but even the poets, the novelists, the artists are necessary to the perfection of its life. Without them and their work the national mind would be as incomplete as would be the natural universe without beauty. But this, perhaps, you will perceive less clearly, or be less willing to admit.

Necessity for men of culture.

PART XI. LETTER V.

LETTER V.

TO A YOUNG ETONIAN WHO THOUGHT OF BECOMING A COTTON-SPINNER.

Absurd old prejudices against commerce—Stigma attached to the great majority of occupations—Traditions of feudalism—Distinctions between one trade and another—A real instance of an Etonian who had gone into the cotton-trade—Observations on this case—The trade a fine field for energy—A poor one for intellectual culture—It develops practical ability—Culture not possible without leisure—The founders of commercial fortunes.

Absurd old prejudices against commerce.

IT is agreeable to see various indications that the absurd old prejudices against commerce are certainly declining. There still remains quite enough contempt for trade in the professional classes and the aristocracy, to give us frequent opportunities for studying it as a relic of former superstition, unhappily not yet rare enough to be quite a curiosity; but as time passes and people become more rational, it will retreat to out-of-the-way corners of old country mansions and rural parsonages, at a safe distance from the light-giving centres of industry. It is a surprising fact, and one which proves the almost pathetic spirit of deference and submission to superiors which characterizes the English people, that out of the hundreds of occupations which are followed by the busy classes of this country, only three are entirely free from some degrading stigma, so that they may be followed by a high-born youth without any sacrifice of caste. The wonder is that the great active majority of the nation, the men who by their industry and intelligence have made England what she is, should ever have been willing to submit to so insolent a rule as this rule of caste, which,

Stigma cast on the majority of occupations.

instead of honouring industry, honoured idleness, and attached a stigma to the most useful and important trades. The landowner, the soldier, the priest, these three were pure from every stain of degradation, and only these three were quite absolutely and ethereally pure. Next to them came the lawyer and the physician, on whom there rested some traces of the lower earth; so that although the youthful baron would fight or preach, he would neither plead nor heal. And after these came the lower professions and the innumerable trades, all marked with stigmas of deeper and deeper degradation.

The rule of caste.

From the intellectual point of view these prejudices indicate a state of society in which public opinion has not emerged from barbarism. It understands the strength of the feudal chief having land, with serfs or voters on the land; it knows the uses of the sword, and it dreads the menaces of the priesthood. Beyond this it knows little, and despises what it does not understand. It is ignorant of science, and industry, and art; it despises them as servile occupations beneath its conception of the gentleman. This is the tradition of countries which retain the impressions of feudalism; but notwithstanding all our philosophy, it is difficult for us to avoid some feeling of astonishment when we reflect that the public opinion of England—a country that owes so much of her greatness and nearly all her wealth to commercial enterprise—should be contemptuous towards commerce.

Barbarism.

Vestiges of the feudal state.

I may notice, in passing, a very curious form of this narrowness. Trade is despised, but distinctions are established between one trade and another. A man who sells wine is considered more of a gentleman than a man who sells figs and raisins; and I believe you will

Distinctions between trades.

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find, if you observe people carefully, that a woollen manufacturer is thought to be a shade less vulgar than a cotton manufacturer. These distinctions are seldom based on reason, for the work of commerce is generally very much the same sort of work, mentally, whatever may be the materials it deals in. You may be heartily congratulated on the strength of mind, firmness of resolution, and superiority to prejudice, which have led you to choose the business of a cotton-spinner. It is an excellent business, and, in itself, every whit as honourable as dealing in corn and cattle, which our nobles do habitually without reproach. But now that I have disclaimed any participation in the stupid narrowness which despises trade in general, and the cotton-trade in particular, let me add a few words upon the effects of the cotton business on the mind.

The cotton trade.

There appeared in one of the newspapers a little time since a most interesting and evidently genuine letter from an Etonian, who had actually entered business in a cotton factory, and devoted himself to it so as to earn the confidence of his employers and a salary of 400*l.* a year as manager. He had waited some time uselessly for a diplomatic appointment which did not arrive, and so, rather than lose the best years of early manhood, as a more indolent fellow would have done very willingly, in pure idleness, he took the resolution of entering business, and carried out his determination with admirable persistence. At first nobody would believe that the "swell" could be serious; people thought that his idea of manufacturing was a mere freak, and expected him to abandon it when he had to face the tedium of the daily work; but the swell *was* serious—went to the mill at six in the morning and stayed there till six at night, from

Letter from an Etonian.

How he entered the cotton-business

Monday till Saturday inclusive. After a year of this, his new companions believed in him.

Now, all this is very admirable indeed as a manifestation of energy, and that truest independence which looks to fortune as the reward of its own manly effort, but it may be permitted to me to make a few observations on this young gentleman's resolve. What he did seems to me rather the act of an energetic nature seeking an outlet for energy, than of an intellectual nature seeking pasture and exercise for the intellect. I am far indeed from desiring, by this comparison, to cast any disparaging light on the young gentleman's natural endowments, which appear to have been valuable in their order and robust in their degree, nor do I question the wisdom of his choice; all I mean to imply is, that although he had chosen a fine large field for simple energy, it was a poor and barren field for the intellect to pasture in. Consider for one moment the difference in this respect between the career which he had abandoned and the trade he had embraced. As an *attaché* he would have lived in capital cities, have had the best opportunities for perfecting himself in modern languages, and for meeting the most varied and the most interesting society. In every day there would have been precious hours of leisure, to be employed in the increase of his culture. If an intellectual man, having to choose between diplomacy and cotton-spinning, preferred cotton-spinning, it would be from the desire for wealth, or from the love of an English home. The life of a cotton manufacturer, who personally attends to his business with that close supervision which has generally conducted to success, leaves scarcely any margin for intellectual pleasure or spare energy for intellectual work. After ten hours in the mill, it is difficult

The act of an energetic nature.

Life of an attaché.

Life of a cotton-manufacturer.

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to sit down and study; and even if there were energy enough, the mind would not readily cast off the burden of great practical anxieties and responsibilities so as to attune itself to disinterested thinking. The leaders of industry often display mental power of as high an order as that which is employed in the government of great empires; they show the highest administrative ability, they have to deal continually with financial questions which on their smaller scale require as much forethought and acumen as those that concern the exchequer; but the ability they need is always strictly practical, and there is the widest difference between the practical and the intellectual minds. A constant and close pressure of practical considerations develops the sort of power which deals effectually with the present and its needs but atrophies the higher mind. The two minds which we call intelligence and intellect resemble the feet and wings of birds. Eagles and swallows walk badly or not at all, but they have a marvellous strength of flight; ostriches are great pedestrians, but they know nothing of the regions of the air. The best that can be hoped for men immersed in the details of business is that they may be able, like partridges and pheasants, to take a short flight on an emergency, and rise, if only for a few minutes, above the level of the stubble and the copse.

The leaders of industry.

Intelligence and intellect.

Without, therefore, desiring to imply any prejudiced contempt for trade, I do desire to urge the consideration of its inevitable effects upon the mind. For men of great practical intelligence and abundant energy, trade is all-sufficing, but it could never entirely satisfy an intellectual nature. And although there is drudgery in every pursuit, for even literature and painting are full of it, still there are certain kinds of drudgery which intellectual natures

Effects of trade upon the mind.

find to be harder to endure than others. The drudgery which they bear least easily is an incessant attention to duties which have no intellectual interest, and yet which cannot be properly performed mechanically so as to leave the mind at liberty for its own speculations. Deep thinkers are notoriously absent, for thought requires abraction from what surrounds us, and it is hard for them to be denied the liberty of dreaming. An intellectual person might be happy as a stone-breaker on the roadside, because the work would leave his mind at liberty; but he would certainly be miserable as an engine-driver at a coal-pit shaft, where the abstraction of an instant would imperil the lives of others.

Abstraction.

In a recent address delivered by Mr. Gladstone at Liverpool, he acknowledged the neglect of culture which is one of the shortcomings of our trading community, and held out the hope (perhaps in some degree illusory) that the same persons might become eminent in commerce and in learning. No doubt there have been instances of this; and when a "concern" has been firmly established by the energy of a predecessor, the heir to it may be satisfied with a royal sort of supervision, leaving the drudgery of detail to his managers, and so secure for himself that sufficient leisure without which high culture is not possible. But the *founders* of great commercial fortunes have, I believe, in every instance thrown their *whole* energy into their trade, making wealth their aim, and leaving culture to be added in another generation. The founders of commercial families are in this country usually men of great mother-wit and plenty of determination—but illiterate.

Neglect of culture.

Founders of fortunes.

PART XII.

SURROUNDINGS.

LETTER I.

TO A FRIEND WHO OFTEN CHANGED HIS PLACE OF RESIDENCE.

PART XII. LETTER I.

An unsettled class of English people—Effect of localities on the mind—Reaction against surroundings — Landscape-painting a consequence of it—Crushing effect of too much natural magnificence—The mind takes colour from its surroundings—Selection of a place of residence—Charles Dickens—Heinrich Heine—Dr. Arnold at Rugby—His house in the Lake district—Tycho Brahe—His establishment on the island of Hween—The young Humboldts in the Castle of Tegel—Alexander Humboldt's appreciation of Paris—Dr. Johnson—Mr. Buckle—Cowper—Galileo.

Unsettled English people.

I FIND that there is a whole class of English subjects (you belong to that class) of whom it is utterly impossible to predict where they will be living in five years. Indeed, as you are the worst of correspondents, I only learned your present address, by sheer accident, from a perfect stranger, and he told me, of course, that you had plans for going somewhere else, but where that might be he knew not. The civilized English nomad is usually, like

yourself, a person of independent means, rich enough to bear the expenses of frequent removals, but without the cares of property. His money is safely invested in the funds, or in railways; and so, wherever the postman can bring his dividends, he can live in freedom from material cares. When his wife is as unsettled as himself, the pair seem to live in a balloon, or in a sort of Noah's ark, which goes whither the wind lists, and takes ground in the most unexpected places.

Effect of localities upon the mind.

Have you ever studied the effect of localities on the mind—on your own mind? That which we are is due in great part to the accident of our surroundings, which act upon us in one of two quite opposite ways. Either we feel in harmony with them, in which case they produce a positive effect upon us, or else we are out of harmony, and then they drive us into the strangest reactions. A great ugly English town, like Manchester, for instance, makes some men such thorough townsmen that they cannot live without smoky chimneys; or it fills the souls of others with such a passionate longing for beautiful scenery and rustic retirement, that they find it absolutely necessary to bury themselves from time to time in the recesses of picturesque mountains. The development of modern landscape-painting has not been due to habits of rural existence, but to the growth of very big and hideous modern cities, which made men long for shady forests, and pure streams, and magnificent spectacles of sunset, and dawn, and moonlight. It is by this time a trite observation that people who have always lived in beautiful scenery do not, and cannot, appreciate it; that too much natural magnificence positively crushes the activity of the intellec, and that its best effect is simply that of refreshment for people who have not

Manchester

Landscape-painting.

Natural magnificence.

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access to it every day. It happens too, in a converse way, that rustics and mountaineers have the strongest appreciation of the advantages of great cities, and thrive in them often more happily than citizens who are born in the brick streets. Those who have great facilities for changing their place of residence ought always to bear in mind that every locality is like a dyer's vat, and that the residents take its colour, or some other colour, from it, just as the clothes do that the dyer steeps in stain. If you look back upon your past life, you will assuredly admit that every place has coloured your mental habits; and that although other tints from other places have supervened, so that it may be difficult to say precisely what remains of the place you lived in many years ago, still something does remain, like the effect of the first painting on a picture, which tells on the whole work permanently, though it may have been covered over and over again by what painters call scumblings and glazings.

Every locality like a dyer's vat.

Selection of a place of residence.

The selection of a place of residence, even though we only intend to pass a few short years in it, is from the intellectual point of view a matter so important that one can hardly exaggerate its consequences. We see this quite plainly in the case of authors, whose minds are more visible to us than the minds of other men, and therefore more easily and conveniently studied. We need no biographer to inform us that Dickens was a Londoner, that Browning had lived in Italy, that Ruskin had passed many seasons in Switzerland and Venice. Suppose for one moment that these three authors had been born in Ireland, and had never quitted it, is it not certain that their production would have been different? Let us carry our supposition farther still, and conceive, if

Dickens. Browning. Ruskin.

we can, the difference to their literary performance if they had been born, not in Ireland, but in Iceland, and lived there all their lives! Is it not highly probable that in this case their production would have been so starved and impoverished from insufficiency of material and of suggestion, that they would have uttered nothing but some simple expression of sentiment and imagination, some homely song or tale? All sights and sounds have their influence on our temper and on our thoughts, and our inmost being is not the same in one place as in another. We are like blank paper that takes a tint by reflection from what is nearest, and changes it as its surroundings change. In a dull grey room, how grey and dull it looks! but it will be bathed in rose or amber if the hangings are crimson or yellow. There are natures that go to the streams of life in great cities as the hart goes to the water-brooks; there are other natures that need the solitude of primæval forests and the silence of the Alps. The most popular of English novelists sometimes went to write in the tranquillity of beautiful scenery, taking his manuscript to the shore of some azure lake in Switzerland, in sight of the eternal snow; but all that beauty and peace, all that sweetness of pure air and colour, were not seductive enough to overcome for many days the deep longing for the London streets. His genius needed the streets, as a bee needs the summer flowers, and languished when long separated from them. Others have needed the wild heather, or the murmur of the ocean, or the sound of autumn winds that strip great forest-trees. Who does not deeply pity poor Heine in his last sad years, when he lay fixed on his couch of pain in that narrow Parisian lodging, and compared it to the sounding grave of Merlin the enchanter, "which is

Influence of near things.

Need for streets.

Need for woods.

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situated in the wood of Brozeliande, in Brittany, under lofty oaks whose tops taper, like emerald flames, towards heaven. O brother Merlin," he exclaims, and with what touching pathos! "O brother Merlin, I envy thee those trees, with their fresh breezes, for never a green leaf rustles about this mattress-grave of mine in Paris, where from morning till night I hear nothing but the rattle of wheels, the clatter of hammers, street-brawls, and the jingling of pianofortes!"

Heine's longing for woods.

Dr. Arnold.

In the biography of Dr. Arnold, his longing for natural beauty recurs as one of the peculiarities of his constitution. He did not need very grand scenery, though he enjoyed it deeply, but some wild natural loveliness was such a necessity for him that he pined for it unhappily in its absence. Rugby could offer him scarcely anything of this. "We have no hills," he lamented, "no plains—not a single wood, and but one single copse; no heath, no down; no rock, no river, no clear stream—scarcely any flowers, for the lias is particularly poor in them—nothing but one endless monotony of enclosed fields and hedgerow trees. This is to me a daily privation; it robs me of what is naturally my anti-attrition; and as I grow older I begin to feel it. . . . The positive dulness of the country about Rugby makes it to me a mere working-place: I cannot expatiate there even in my walks."

Effect on him of Warwickshire scenery.

"The monotonous character of the midland scenery of Warwickshire," says Dr. Arnold's biographer, "was to him, with his strong love of natural beauty and variety, absolutely repulsive; there was something almost touching in the eagerness with which, amidst that 'endless succession of fields and hedgerows,' he would make the most of any features of a higher order; in the

Dr. Arnold at Rugby.

pleasure with which he would cherish the few places where the current of the Avon was perceptible, or where a glimpse of the horizon could be discerned; in the humorous despair with which he would gaze on the dull expanse of fields eastward from Rugby. It is no wonder we do not like looking that way, when one considers that there is nothing fine between us and the Ural mountains. Conceive what you look over, for you just miss Sweden, and look over Holland, the north of Germany, and the centre of Russia."[1]

This dreadful midland monotony impelled Dr. Arnold to seek refreshment and compensation in a holiday home in the Lake district, and there he found all that his eyes longed for, streams, hills, woods, and wild-flowers. Nor had his belief in the value of these sweet natural surroundings been illusory; such instincts are not given for our betrayal, and the soul of a wise man knows its own needs, both before they are supplied, and after. Westmoreland gave him all he had hoped from it, and more. "Body and mind," he wrote, "alike seem to repose greedily in delicious quiet, without dulness, which we enjoy in Westmoreland." And again: "At Allan Bank, in the summer, I worked on the Roman history, and hope to do so again in the winter. It is very inspiring to write with such a view before one's eyes as that from our drawing-room at Allan Bank, where the trees of the shrubbery gradually run up into the trees of the cliff, and the mountain-side, with its infinite variety of rocky peaks and points upon which the cattle expatiate, rises over the tops of the trees."

Effect of Westmoreland on Arnold.

Of all happily-situated mental labourers who have

[1] How purely this is the misery of a man of culture! A peasant would not have gone so far.

PART XII. LETTER I.

Tycho Brahe on his island.

worked since the days of Horace, surely Tycho Brahe was the happiest and most to be envied. King Frederick of Denmark gave him a delightful island for his habitation, large enough for him not to feel imprisoned (the circumference being about five miles), yet little enough for him to feel as snugly at home there as Mr. Waterton in his high-walled park. The land was fertile and rich in game, so that the scientific Robinson Crusoe lived in material abundance; and as he was only about seven miles from Copenhagen, he could procure everything necessary to his convenience. He built a great house on the elevated land in the midst of the isle, about three-quarters of a mile from the sea, a palace of art and science, with statues and paintings and all the apparatus which the ingenuity of that age could contrive for the advancement of astronomical pursuits. Uniting the case of a rich nobleman's existence with every aid to science, including special erections for his instruments, and a printing establishment that worked under his own immediate direction, he lived far enough from the capital to enjoy the most perfect tranquillity, yet near enough to escape the consequences of too absolute isolation. Aided in all he undertook by a staff of assistants that he himself had trained, supported in his labour by the encouragement of his sovereign, and especially by his own unflagging interest in scientific investigation, he led in that peaceful island the ideal intellectual life. Of that mansion where he laboured, of the observatory where he watched the celestial phenomena, surrounded but not disturbed by the waves of a shallow sea, there remains at this day literally not one stone upon another; but many a less fortunate labourer in the same field, harassed by poverty, distracted by noise and interrup-

Advantages of the situation.

tion, has remembered with pardonable envy the splendid peace of Uranienborg.

The brothers Humboldt at Tegel.

It was one of the many fortunate circumstances in the position of the two Humboldts that they passed their youth in the quiet old castle of Tegel, separated from Berlin by a pine-wood, and surrounded by walks and gardens. They too, like Tycho Brahe, enjoyed that happy combination of tranquillity with the neighbourhood of a capital city which is so peculiarly favourable to culture. In later life, when Alexander Humboldt had collected those immense masses of material which were the result of his travels in South America, he warmly appreciated the unequalled advantages of Paris. He knew how to extract from the solitudes of primæval nature what he wanted for the enrichment of his mind; but he knew also how to avail himself of all the assistance and opportunities which are only to be had in great capitals. He was not attracted to town-life, like Dr. Johnson and Mr. Buckle, to the exclusion of wild nature; but neither, on the other hand, had he that horror of towns which was a morbid defect in Cowper, and which condemns those who suffer from it to rusticity. Even Galileo, who thought the country especially favourable to speculative intellects, and the walls of cities an imprisonment for them, declared that the best years of his life were those he had spent in Padua.

Alexander Humboldt at Paris.

Dr. Johnson.

Mr. Buckle

Cowper.

Galileo.

LETTER II.

TO A FRIEND WHO MAINTAINED THAT SURROUNDINGS WERE A MATTER OF INDIFFERENCE TO A THOROUGHLY OCCUPIED MIND.

Archimedes at the siege of Syracuse—Geoffroy St. Hilaire in the besieged city of Alexandria—Goethe at the bombardment of Verdun—Lullo, the Oriental missionary—Giordano Bruno—Unacknowledged effect of surroundings—Effect of Frankfort on Goethe—Great capitals—Goethe—His garden-house—What he said about Béranger and Paris—Fortunate surroundings of Titian.

THERE are so many well-known instances of men who have been able to continue their intellectual labours under the most unfavourable conditions, that your argument might be powerfully supported by an appeal to actual experience. There is Archimedes, of course, to begin with, who certainly seems to have abstracted himself sufficiently from the tumult of a great siege to forget it altogether when occupied with his mathematical problems. The prevalent stories of his death, though not identical, point evidently to a habit of abstraction which had been remarked as a peculiarity by those about him, and it is probable enough that a great inventor in engineering would follow his usual speculations under circumstances which, though dangerous, had lasted long enough to become habitual. Even modern warfare, which from the use of gunpowder is so much noisier than that which raged at Syracuse, does not hinder men from thinking and writing when they are used to it. Geoffroy St. Hilaire never worked more steadily and regularly in his whole life than he did in the midst

Archimedes at Syracuse.

Geoffroy St. Hilaire.

Geoffroy St. Hilair, at the siege of Alexandria

of the besieged city of Alexandria. "Knowledge is so sweet," he said long afterwards, in speaking of this experience, "that it never entered my thoughts how a bombshell might in an instant have cast into the abyss both me and my documents." By good luck two electric fish had been caught and given to him just then, so he immediately began to make experiments, as if he had been in his own cabinet in Paris, and for three weeks he thought of nothing else, utterly forgetting the fierce warfare that filled the air with thunder and flame, and the streets with victims. He had sixty-four hypotheses to amuse him, and it was necessary to review his whole scientific acquirement with reference to each of these as he considered them one by one. It may be doubted, however, whether he was more in danger from the bombardment or from the intensity of his own mental concentration. He grew thin and haggard, slept one hour in the twenty-four, and lived in a perilous condition of nervous strain and excitement. Goethe at the bombardment of Verdun, letting his mind take its own course, found that it did not occupy itself with tragedies, or with anything suggested by what was passing in the conflict around him, but by scientific considerations about the phenomena of colours. He noticed, in a passing observation, the bad effect of war upon the mind, how it makes people destructive one day and creative the next, how it accustoms them to phrases intended to excite hope in desperate circumstances, thus producing a peculiar sort of hypocrisy different from the priestly and courtly kind. This is the extent of his interest in the war; but when he finds some soldiers fishing he is attracted to the spot and profoundly occupied—not with the soldiers, but with the optical phenomena on the

Goethe at the bombardment of Verdun.

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water. He was never very much moved by external events, nor did he take that intense interest in the politics of the day which we often find in people less studious of literature and science. Raimond Lullo, the Oriental missionary, continued to write many volumes in the midst of the most continual difficulties and dangers, preserving as much mental energy and clearness as if he had been safe and tranquil in a library. Giordano Bruno worked constantly also in the midst of political troubles and religious persecutions, and his biographer tells us that "il desiderio vivissimo della scienza aveva ben più efficacia sull' animo del Bruno, che non gli avvenimenti esterni."

Lullo.

Giordano Bruno.

These examples which have just occurred to me, and many others that it would be easy to collect, may be taken to prove at least so much as this, that it is possible to be absorbed in private studies when surrounded by the most disturbing influences; but even in these cases it would be a mistake to conclude that the surroundings had no effect whatever. There can be no doubt that Geoffroy St. Hilaire was intensely excited by the siege of Alexandria, though he may not have attributed his excitement to that cause. His mind was occupied with the electrical fishes, but his nervous system was wrought upon by the siege, and kept in that state of tension which at the same time enabled him to get through a gigantic piece of intellectual labour and made him incapable of rest. Had this condition been prolonged it must have terminated either in exhaustion or in madness. Men have often engaged in literature or science to escape the pressure of anxiety, which strenuous mental labour permits us, at least temporarily, to forget; but the circumstances which surround us have invariably an in-

Geoffroy St. Hilaire: effects of the siege on him.

fluence of some kind upon our thinking, though the connection may not be obvious. Even in the case of Goethe, who could study optics on a battle-field, his English biographer recognizes the effect of the Frankfort life which surrounded the great author in his childhood. "The old Frankfort city, with its busy crowds, its fairs, its mixed population, and its many sources of excitement, offered great temptations and great pasture to so desultory a genius. This is perhaps a case wherein circumstances may be seen influencing the direction of character. . . . A large continuity of thought and effort was perhaps radically uncongenial to such a temperament; yet one cannot help speculating whether under other circumstances he might not have achieved it. Had he been reared in a quiet little old German town, where he would have daily seen the same faces in the silent streets, and come in contact with the same characters, his culture might have been less various, but it might perhaps have been deeper. Had he been reared in the country, with only the changing seasons and the sweet serenities of nature to occupy his attention when released from study, he would certainly have been a different poet. The long summer afternoons spent in lonely rambles, the deepening twilights filled with shadowy visions, the slow uniformity of his external life necessarily throwing him more and more upon the subtler diversities of inward experience, would inevitably have influenced his genius in quite different directions, would have animated his works with a very different spirit."

Frankfort: effects of the city on Goethe in his childhood.

Small old towns.

The country.

We are sometimes told that life in a great capital is essential to the development of genius, but Frankfort was the largest town Goethe ever lived in, and he never

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Weimar.

visited either Paris or London. Much of the sanity of his genius may have been due to his residence in so tranquil a place as Weimar, where he could shut himself up in his "garden-house" and lock all the gates of the bridge over the Ilm. "The solitude," says Mr. Lewes, "is absolute, broken only by the occasional sound of the church clock, the music from the barracks, and the screaming of the peacocks spreading their superb beauty in the park." Few men of genius have been happier in their surroundings than Goethe. He had tranquillity, and yet was not deprived of intellectual intercourse; the scenery within excursion-distance from his home was interesting and even inspiring, yet not so splendid as to be overwhelming. We know from his conversations that he was quite aware of the value of those little centres of culture to Germany, and yet in one place he speaks of Béranger in the tone which seems to imply an appreciation of the larger life of Paris. "Fancy," he says, "this same Béranger away from Paris, and the influence and opportunities of a world-city, born as the son of a poor tailor, at Jena or Weimar; let him run his wretched career in either of the two small cities, and see what fruit would have grown on such a soil and in such an atmosphere."

Surroundings of Goethe.

Béranger.

We are nothing of ourselves.

We cannot too frequently be reminded that we are nothing of ourselves, and by ourselves, and are only something by the place we hold in the intellectual chain of humanity by which electricity is conveyed to us and through us—to be increased in the transmission if we have great natural power and are favourably situated, but not otherwise. A child is born to the Vecelli family at Cadore, and when it is nine years old is taken to Venice and placed under the tuition of Sebastian Zuccato.

Titian.

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LETTER II.
Fortunate surroundings of Titian.

Afterwards he goes to Bellini's school, and there gets acquainted with another student, one year his junior, whose name is Barbarelli. They live together and work together in Venice; then young Barbarelli (known to posterity as Giorgione), after putting on certain spaces of wall and squares of canvas such colour as the world had never before seen, dies in his early manhood and leaves Vecellio, whom we call Titian, to work on there in Venice till the plague stays his hand in his hundredth year. The genius came into the world, but all the possibilities of his development depended upon the place and the time. He came exactly in the right place and precisely at the right time. To be born not far from Venice in the days of Bellini, to be taken there at nine years old, to have Giorgione for one's comrade, all this was as fortunate for an artistic career as the circumstances of Alexander of Macedon were for a career of conquest.

LETTER III.

LETTER III.

TO AN ARTIST WHO WAS FITTING UP A MAGNIFICENT NEW STUDIO.

Pleasure of planning a studio—Opinions of an outsider—Saint Bernard—Father Ravignan—Goethe's study and bed-room—Gustave Doré's studio—Leslie's painting-room—Turner's opinion—Habits of Scott and Dickens—Extremes good—Vulgar mediocrity not so good—Value of beautiful views to literary men—Montaigne—Views from the author's windows.

NOTHING in the life of an artist is more agreeable than the building and furnishing of the studio in which he hopes to produce his most mature and perfect work. It is so pleasant to labour when we are surrounded by beauty and convenience, that painters find a large and

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handsome studio to be an addition to the happiness of their lives, and they usually dream of it, and plan it, several years before the dream is realized.

The love of fine studios.

Only a few days ago I was talking on this very subject with an intellectual friend who is not an artist, and who maintained that the love of fine studios is in great part a mere illusion. He admitted the necessity for size, and for a proper kind of light, but laughed at carved oak, and tapestry, and armour, and the knicknacks that artists encumber themselves with. He would have it that a mind thoroughly occupied with its own business knew nothing whatever of the objects that surrounded it, and he cited two examples—Saint Bernard, who travelled all day by the shore of Lake Leman without seeing it, and the *père* Ravignan, who worked in a bare little room with a common table of blackened pine and a cheap rush-bottomed chair. On this I translated to him, from Goethe's life by Lewes, a passage which was new to him and delighted him as a confirmation of his theory. The biographer describes the poet's study as "a low-roofed narrow room, somewhat dark, for it is lighted only through two tiny windows, and furnished with a simplicity quite touching to behold. In the centre stands a plain oval table of unpolished oak. No arm-chair is to be seen, no sofa, nothing which speaks of ease. A plain hard chair has beside it the basket in which he used to place his handkerchief. Against the wall, on the right, is a long pear-tree table, with book-shelves, on which stand lexicons and manuals. . . . On the side-wall again, a bookcase with some works of poets. On the wall to the left is a long desk of soft wood, at which he was wont to write. A sheet of paper with notes of contemporary history is fastened near the door.

Occupied minds.

The private study of Goethe.

The same door leads into a bed-room, if bed-room it can be called, which no maid-of-all-work in England would accept without a murmur: it is a closet with a window. A simple bed, an arm-chair by its side, and a tiny washing-table with a small white basin on it, and a sponge, is all the furniture. To enter this room with any feeling for the greatness and goodness of him who slept here, and who here slept his last sleep, brings tears into our eyes, and makes the breathing deep."

When I had finished reading this passage, my friend exclaimed triumphantly, "There! don't you see that it was just because Goethe had imaginative power of a strong and active kind that he cared nothing about what surrounded him when he worked? He had statues and pictures to occupy his mind when it was disengaged, but when he wrote he preferred that bare little cell where nothing was to be seen that could distract his attention for an instant. Depend upon it, Goethe acted in this matter either from a deliberate and most wise calculation, or else from the sure instinct of genius."

Goethe's cell.

Whilst we were on this subject I thought over other instances, and remembered my surprise on visiting Gustave Doré in his painting-room in Paris. Doré has a Gothic exuberance of imagination, so I expected a painting-room something like Victor Hugo's house, rather barbarous, but very rich and interesting, with plenty of carved cabinets, and tapestry, and *biblos*, as they call picturesque curiosities in Paris. To my surprise, there was nothing (except canvasses and easels) but a small deal table, on which tubes of oil-colour were thrown in disorder, and two cheap chairs. Here, evidently, the pleasure of painting was sufficient to occupy the artist; and in the room where he made his illustrations the

G. Doré's painting-room.

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characteristics were simplicity and good practical arrangements for order, but there was nothing to amuse the imagination. Mr. Leslie used to paint in a room which was just like any other in the house, and had none of the peculiarities of a studio. Turner did not care in the least what sort of a room he painted in, provided it had a door, and a bolt on the inside. Scott could write anywhere, even in the family sitting-room, with talk going forward as usual; and after he had finished Abbotsford, he did not write in any of its rich and noble rooms, but in a simple closet with book-shelves round it. Dickens wrote in a comfortable room, well-lighted and cheerful, and he liked to have funny little bronzes on his writing-table.

Leslie's painting-room.

Turner.

Scott.

The best way appears to be to surround ourselves, whenever it can be conveniently done, with whatever we know by experience to be favourable to our work. I think the barest cell monk ever prayed in would be a good place for imaginative composition, and so too would be the most magnificent rooms in Chatsworth or Blenheim. A middling sort of place with a Philistine character, vulgar upholstery, and vulgar pictures or engravings, is really dangerous, because these things often attract attention in the intervals of labour and occupy it in a mean way. An artist is always the better for having something that may profitably amuse and occupy his eye when he quits his picture, and I think it is a right instinct which leads artists to surround themselves with many picturesque and beautiful things, not too orderly in their arrangement, so that there may be pleasant surprises for the eye, as there are in nature.

Vulgar surroundings.

For literary men there is nothing so valuable as a window with a cheerful and beautiful prospect. It is good for us to have this refreshment for the eye when we

Montaigne's private study.

leave off working, and Montaigne did wisely to have his study up in a tower from which he had extensive views. There is a well-known objection to extensive views as wanting in snugness and comfort, but this objection scarcely applies to the especial case of literary men. What we want is not so much snugness as relief, refreshment, suggestion, and we get these, as a general rule, much better from wide prospects than from limited ones. I have just alluded to Montaigne,—will you permit me to imitate that dear old philosopher in his egotism and describe to you the view from the room I write in, which cheers and amuses me continually? But before describing this, let me describe another of which the recollection is very dear to me and as vivid as a freshly-painted picture. In years gone by, I had only to look up from my desk and see a noble loch in its inexhaustible loveliness, and a mountain in its majesty. It was a daily and hourly delight to watch the breezes play about the enchanted isles, on the delicate silvery surface, dimming some clear reflection, or trailing it out in length, or cutting sharply across it with acres of rippling blue. It was a frequent pleasure to see the clouds play about the crest of Cruachan and Ben Vorich's golden head, grey mists that crept upwards from the valleys till the sunshine suddenly caught them and made them brighter than the snows they shaded. And the leagues and leagues of heather on the lower land to the southward that became like the aniline dyes of deepest purple and blue, when the sky was grey in the evening—all save one orange-streak! Ah, those were spectacles never to be forgotten, splendours of light and glory, and sadness of deepening gloom when the eyes grew moist in the twilight and secretly drank their tears.

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