

THE

214

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THE  
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A REMINISCENCE OF JOHN ROBINSON,  
THE FOUNDER OF A PROFESSORSHIP IN WASHINGTON COLLEGE,  
VIRGINIA.\*

As few persons are now living who were his contemporaries, it seems proper that a man who contributed so much to the promotion of literature and science should not be entirely given up to oblivion.

John Robinson was a native of Ireland. When a child, he lost his father, and by an uncle was bound to a weaver to learn the trade. After a few years, he became dissatisfied, and determined to emigrate to America. How he was released from his indentures, or how he got the means of paying his passage, is not known. As I first knew him he was an itinerant weaver, going from house to house, where looms were kept. He was probably about sixteen or seventeen years of age; a good-natured, jovial lad. After some time he found a permanent home at the house of General Bowyer, near Lexington, Virginia. His good temper and good behaviour, with a

\* We are indebted to a correspondent, who writes with a knowledge of the facts, for this article of biographical reminiscence. Its connexion with a valuable literary institution adds to its interest.

## III.

Arm in arm I see them wending  
 On the chequered path of men;  
 Smile to smile blithe hope is lending;  
 Voice with voice is tuneful blending  
 In love's lasting deep AMEN.

MAX.

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 BOOKS AND BUSINESS.

ADDRESSED TO A MERCANTILE FRIEND.

LETTER FIRST.

You have prescribed for me, my dear Blanchard, a harder task than you meant in asking me to give you some directions about your library and your reading. The beautiful repositories which you showed me might tempt to the enumeration of many volumes both costly and agreeable, and the cabinet opening into your green-house is a retreat which might have delighted Cicero, Temple, Rousseau or Haydn, each of whom added the delectations of sense to the cultivation of internal taste. It would be easy to fill your shelves, and with a pile of catalogues at my elbow it would not take me long to run up a list as comprehensive as your largest invoices. I could name the sciences and the arts, and sketch you a plan like those which fill our books on education, and which seem prepared rather to blazon the resources of the prescriber than to shorten the scholar's toil. But you have informed me of the draught made on your hours by the ever-moving wheel of merchandise, and I have observed the self-control which is necessary to redeem even the scanty hours which you bestow on literature and society. My duty is therefore plainly that of compression and sim-

plification. When you make a voyage, you are careful to secure abridgment, and though in your own vessel you economize every niche and cranny of your trunks and state-room. In the present instance the same rigid frugality is demanded; only the treasure to be used so sparingly is Time. You tell me you need the *multum in parvo*, and this shall be my maxim in the hints I have to give.

Glittering rows of unread volumes in Turkey morocco and gold are not your object, or I should promptly dismiss you to other guides. You might jot down items from the catalogue of the trade sales, or regulate your purchases by the bids given to Cooley and Keese. I trust you have long since learnt the preciousness of many a homely volume in russet covers; and, what is a greater attainment, still discovered that true knowledge and the exquisite delights of truth are not dependant on multiplicity of books. Your very means of purchase which Providence has made so great, and the symmetry which your bookshelves might easily have with your other meubles, offer a snare at the outset. My very first advice therefore is that you dismiss from your mind all disposition to treat books as furniture. They may go for such in your ledger and policy of insurance, but if they go for such in your thoughts, I abandon you at once as an incorrigible member of the bourgeoisie. Go on and store your mahogany cases with all the *editions de luxe* which issue from London and Paris. Take your guests and correspondents into the princely saloon gleaming with plate glass and adorned with tall folios and plates of atlas-folio. But never dream of letters properly so called. If on the other hand you sincerely desire to cheer and beautify the remaining years by converse with the wisdom of the great and good, and seek only how to make the most of your time; if you feel the chagrin resulting from the absorption of your thoughts in the ways and means of attaining wealth, and readily acknowledge that the exercise and development of the mental powers have been narrow and in one direction; so that you gladly seek some methods

of husbanding your middle and later years—come on! It is my privilege to cheer you, and to show a royal way, in spite of the proverb; if that way can be called royal which is open, spacious and smooth, overhung with vines, diversified with flowers, and winding amidst the beauties and glories of every prospect. Knowledge, my dear friend, is that attainment of which books are but the means and vehicle. If the means can be lessened, if the road can be shortened, if the machinery can be simplified, if the catalogue can be weeded out, it is so much clear gain. And hence I would seriously exhort you, if the customs of society and the rivalry of mercantile display force you to have a great and wealthy collection of splendid books, to do by them as a great British divine is said to do with his table,—offer the banquet largely to the guests, but dine upon a plain joint. Or as Newton made a large hole in his study door for the cat and a small hole for the kitten, so do you furnish a library for the praise and glory of your palatial dwelling, but reserve a snug closet for yourself—and me.

I wish I could imprint on your mind one truth derived from a life spent among books, namely that there is power and delight in *a few volumes*. And do we not find increasingly every year that it is not to the thousand, but the few, that we come back for the solace and corroboration of friendship? To nine-tenths of what even great scholars read they are driven by an ignoble emulation. They are ashamed not to have read this or that, which young men or young women talk about. This might answer very well when there were four or five printers in America, and when all the books of our grandsires were imported at high cost. But who is there out of Bedlam that will undertake to peruse—I will not say all the books, but all the good books that issue from our press? Not only selection is needful but austere selection. Even men whose calling is literary or scientific find this indispensable; how much more such as are engaged in trade? For such the *non multa sed multum* of Seneca has a new signi-

ficancy, and might well be carved upon the lintel of your closet. A few books—I repeat it urgently—a few books must be your chief companions in those hours which you have laudably devoted to the repairing of wastes made by too devout a service at the shrine of gain. Wishing as you naturally must to have a mental culture which shall keep pace with your enlarged means, and the brightening accomplishments of your children, and the mental activity of the circle around you, I do not wonder if you seize convulsively on scores of volumes, and then fall back in a sort of despair. Now I earnestly enjoin it on you to refrain from all such futilities. Remember the fable of the greedy child and the narrow-necked jar. Be aware that the ripe fruits of learning may be grasped without traversing this boundless field. Revert to the grand truth that all knowledge consists of streams from a few fountains, and hasten upward to the springs. If your powers are small, you will make little attainment on either or on any method; if they are great, or even respectable, you will gain more by beginning high up where the springs are, and tracing principles into their results, than by wasting strength and life in restless, wearisome, endless ramblings among the multiplied illimitable waters of the plains below. He who learns principles, learns much in little, or rather learns all things in a few. Therefore do not carry your excellent counting-house maxims so far as to go by tale and measure: make no entry of the number of tomes or pages; erect a different standard, and accustom yourself to forget the means in the end. These are some of my reasons for urging you to confine your more serious reading to a few books.

The next counsel flows so naturally from the former that you have thought of it already. *Read the best.* At present we will not inquire what they are; for however difficult it may be to answer that question, it is a difficulty which must be met on every plan of self-culture by reading. Some books are clearly better than others, and a few are better

than all the rest. You need no Friar Bacon's head to tell you this. Use any criterion, or venture any choice, however paradoxical, my advice is, what books soever you deem the best, procure these, begin with these, adhere to these. What! no variety! no expatiation! *Tonjours perdrix!* Slowly and fairly, my blessed sir. It is one thing to read for culture and by pre-concerted plan, and another thing to read cursorily, *obiter*, as the lawyers say, and for occasional reflection; just as it is one thing to make voyages to Liverpool or Canton in regular trade, and another thing to dash out to the fishing banks in a spanking yacht, with silk pennons and champagne. That figure, on such a July afternoon, has almost spoiled my whole lecture: thank Miss Genevieve for it, who wrote me so picturesque an account of your late cruise. "Let us resume our studies:" those ten, thirty or ninety works, which on a fair survey of literature you soberly conclude to be the best, shall be installed in their peculiar place of honour, from which they shall never be removed as long as you live. You will come to them again and again; till you love the very editions, till the covers gape open; till like Chancellor Kent's volumes they swell and strut with sibylline interleavings, till the pencilled margin almost overruns the text, like some that Coleridge borrowed from Lamb, and till certain passages are engraved in your memory. You will weary of returning to such books just as little as you weary of calling at a dear old friend's door which opens to you without ringing—or of coming to a cherished tree which bears fresh fruit every autumn—or of hearing an ancient song for the five hundredth time—or of laying your arm around the neck of her to whom you thus testify an affection which every year has strengthened.

Of all men living, I know none who need this particular advice more than men of business, who are yet men of reflection, and who desire to make up for lost time by seizing all possible profit during the remaining eventide.

S. L. R.

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OF THE TERM AESTHETICS.

To keep out a new word is as hard as to keep out an imported weed from our cornfields; and we may as well sit down contented with some of the recent inventions, as we have done with the dandelion and the Canada thistle. It is not long since the word *Aesthetics* was as strange in Europe, as it still is to some in America. Like the modern *reliable*, stamped by Sir Robert Peel, it is made in an unscholarlike manner, against analogy; but we needed it, and it will pass into the currency. The Greek adjective *αισθητικος*, from the verb meaning *perceive, be sensible of*, is employed by ancient writers to denote whatever belongs to perception, sensible apprehension, especially by feeling; then, secondarily, for one quick of perception; and sometimes, by later authors, passively, for that which is perceptible. No classical instance can be produced, in which it is applied to the cognizance of the fine arts, as objects of taste. In the nomenclature of modern German philosophy, however, *ästhetisch* and *ästhetik* have become common and indispensable terms. Hence what was once called simply *taste*, with or without a qualifying epithet, is familiarly *ästhetisches Gefühl*, or aesthetic feeling.

The time can be nearly fixed, when it began to be used in



When days not distant shall new visions bring  
 Of power undreamed by Caesar or by King ;  
 When our soft flowing English sends its waves  
 To flood each coast the far Pacific laves ;  
 When Christian millions till the western plains  
 Where yet barbarian night unbroken reigns ;  
 Then freedom's sons, around the sacred fires  
 On lasting altars lighted by their sires,  
 Shall turn with awe the retrospective eye  
 On names whose constellations deck the sky ;  
 Thine, matchless WASHINGTON, pure TAYLOR thine !  
 Twin guardian lights, o'er all our heaven ye shine !  
 Greatest in peace, though unsurpassed in war,  
 Land of my love, thy sons thy glory are !

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## BOOKS AND BUSINESS.

### No. II.

In my previous letter, my dear Blanchard, I acted the part of schoolmaster, so far as to chalk out for your studies some general line of direction. As your docility exceeds my hopes, I will proceed to add a few details, which have at least these merits, that they flow from good will and are sustained by experience. When I said that the way of knowledge is a way of pleasure, I by no means intended that it has not some of the toils and discomforts of other pilgrimages. The journey of life has already taught you, that the highest zest of enjoyment ensues upon some self-control, fatigue and delay. It is so in literal voyages and travels, in the chase, in athletic sports, and the foil only adds brilliancy to the gem. The pain of discipline moreover, as well in things intellectual and moral as in things physical, carries with it that peculiar satisfaction which arises from the sense

of exertion, the stimulus of hope, and the attainment of victory. Languid pleasures scarcely exist. Exertion is an element of rational complacency. This is especially true in activity about knowledge, as it has its highest realization in activity about moral and spiritual objects. Prepare for work. It is the secret of secrets. If our frames were not frail and our souls diseased, the best direction for the highest enjoyment would be keep in perpetual activity; and this is no doubt the condition of happy progress in a better state. Set it fully before you, that the maximum of enjoyment from books, as truly as of profit, is not to be gained without some positive labour and some dogged perseverance. I therefore suggest it to you as a leading maxim: **MAKE UP YOUR MIND TO UNDERTAKE A LITTLE HARD STUDY.**

It would be easy and seductive to spread before you a refection of gay, amusing, diversified and at the same time elegant trifles; and it might be called literature. For this there would be good precedent. The leisure hours of some men, and the whole time of others, is expended on just this sort of reading. Any column of publishers' advertisements, or any counter of a bookstore, will show you what I mean. The object is to entertain, to kill time. The production of such works is unlimited. Not fiction merely—for all fiction is not bad—but books in every nominal division of letters are constructed by hundreds for those who open a volume as they would go to a play. Such effusions stock the market; the demand for them proceeds from all ages and professions; they propagate the evil by increasing the number of unthinking readers; and they are the very books upon which men of much business and little education are prone to fall. In their place they are admirable, but their place is to be wisely chosen. Short of vicious studies, a more disastrous method of reading could not be pursued than the perpetual dealing with such productions as seek only to amuse; whether these be romances, fugitive poetry, or (*sit venia verbo*) Magazines.

You need, not a drowsy saunter among flowers, nor a nap in the fragrant arbour, but a true mental gymnastic. You need it the more, because your days are spent in a routine which is not favourable to the highest development of intellect and taste; because your busy days leave you only brief seasons for study; and because the course which you take must be comprehensive and compendious. Unless you are prepared for some efforts that shall occasionally knit your brow and try your temper, you had better seek other advisers. But if you desire the richest fruit and most concentrated delight, come along and buckle on the harness. I have touched the tender spot in most amateur scholars. They affect learning, and accumulate books, but they have never learnt the secret virtue there is in a little severe application. Perhaps the suggestion is new to you. Examine whether you have ever, in all your evenings of reading, attacked a work which gave you half the headwork which you have experienced in balancing your books. You have a new pleasure in reserve. To enjoy it you must imitate the pugilists, and put yourself into training. You must learn the luxury of conscious faculty and unceasing power; the elation of a self-controlling mind; the grateful freshness of the breeze that shall fan you after attaining by earnest steps the hill-top of truth. Amusement in books you may and shall have; but there is something awaiting you much more exquisite than amusement; and it is to be got by hard study.

After you have properly digested this rather forbidding dose, I lay down another unexpected and it may be unpalatable canon; which is **FALL TO WORK AT ELEMENTARY STUDIES.** fancy your disgust. I see you throw aside my letter, as you would Dr. Bluepill's autograph for the druggist. But better thoughts will supervene. When you read further you will comprehend that I am not for sending you back to your dame's school. I postulate your knowledge of the alphabet, the multiplication-table, and several succeeding stages of

juvenile training. And yet I am very firm in the opinion that the great majority of self-educators, (a name of honour and power) stumble at this stumbling-stone. If the foundation is laid amiss, you know the consequences; if it is not laid at all, no superstructure is possible. Take for granted elements which do not exist, and you conduct your whole subsequent trade on imaginary capital: you must be bankrupt. An indisposition to mend holes in the early work of learning, a contempt about primary branches, a false-shame in confessing ignorance or mistake even to oneself, are the prolific causes of ill success in voluntary study. Go wrong here and you are astray forever. Some heroism is required to brave the terrors of such a conflict as I propose; but I presume on your nerve. Dig deep, and begin at the beginning.

You ask me where I would have you to begin? A prescription is impossible unless I know precisely your case; but if you come to the surgeon you must expect the probe. Assume that there are certain acknowledged beginnings of education—first lines—fundamental topics: they form in all countries the bases on which future accumulations are to be reared. I need not name them: they are the broad part of the pyramid. The danger is that you will at all hazards take these for granted. But I cannot be your tutor after the fashion of M. Jourdain's Maitre de philosophie. I must insist on your jotting down on a slip of paper the names of these arts and sciences, beginning with the humblest. How few men act on the acknowledged principle that every thing depends on these? How few learn in time that blunders here cannot be repaired in after life? Examine yourself, as you would examine your boy; you may do so, if you choose, with the door locked. See how much you know about the elements. On some of these matters you will find a satisfactory proficiency. Even in these, deal honestly, strictly, austerely, inexorably. Note errors; supply defects. Be not ashamed—what I have often done—to recur to the school-book. Review of elements is always advantageous

even to the mature scholar. In some of these departments, you will make up for lost time, in an hour; in others in a day. There will be some, however, concerning which you will say—and wisely—Ah! here are stitches dropped! Here are gaps to be filled! Here is ill work to be ravelled out! Here are old tasks to be performed!

Forgive me for pressing on you an example or two. What lies nearer the ground-level than English Grammar. Every gentleman is supposed to speak and write the English language with propriety. Do all the gentlemen we meet at dinner tables or on 'change, or in literary circles, realize this supposition? Nay; not one in twenty. Half the time the hypergrammatical solecisms are worse than the slips of the illiterate. Did you ever hear a blue stocking say "He called on Charlotte and I?" or a genteel coloured gentleman talk of a message sent "*on yesterday?*" I wish in my heart I could be assured that I ever penned five consecutive pages without tripping in my English. My word for it, you will not peruse such a work as Dr. Bullions's Grammar, with a pencil in your hand, without taking note of sundry deformities in your idiom. Let one example serve for many. Go through with the schedule, and say nothing about it to your ignorant neighbours; such only will misunderstand your aims. A few weeks spent in turning over manuals—and those always the very best—on Geography, a great and noble science, illustrated by the Humboldts, Ritters, and Guyots; on General Mathematics, making no pretension to recondite details; on Natural Philosophy and Chemistry. You would not err much by taking in hand the programme of studies in any respectable college, omitting the profundities of science and those parts which are obviously aside from your line of progress. These lists are carefully arranged so as to embrace what the common consent of learned men prescribes as the material of education. But having thrown out the principle, I need not descend to its particular applications. Deal with elements. Make sure of your basis.

Draft your plan with exactness. Do not shrink from a little preliminary shaking up of the cerebrum. This is the surest of all literary investments; the returns, if not rapid at first, are safe, constant, and increasing in a high compound ratio. Elementary, rudimentary, discipline is the master-key, for lack of which thousands wander all their lives in the corridors of knowledge without ever entering its treasure-chambers.

Now, beware, I pray you, of the very natural error of supposing that there is no gratification in these more rugged paths. In some parts of them there may be the highest. Intellectual pleasure as already hinted is not supine or slothful. It is the pleasure of a mind in action, of faculties put upon their mettle, of exertions crowning themselves at every step with the meed of conquest. This assertion belongs to the admitted principles of mental progress. Hence you will find that the enthusiasm of devoted students is expended, not on the amenities or curiosities or entertainments of science and letters, but on what ignorant and inexperienced persons would consider formidable difficulties. Even habitual pleasure-seekers know that their prizes cost them something, and the traveller, the hunter and the fly-fisher throw in the length and hardship of the way as enhancing the value of the acquisition. You will tell me, before long, that out of this forbidding mine of elementary knowledge you have quarried the instrumentalities of a delight of which you had never dreamed.

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## REFLECTIONS FOR THE DOG-DAYS.

The arrival of the Dog-Days and the accounts furnished in the newspapers, of the number of dogs daily sacrificed in the large cities at the shrine of public apprehension and terror,

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THE RANZ-DES-VACHES.

Every body talks about the Ranz-des-Vaches, and not one in fifty knows what they are. This man can affirm that they are Swiss or perhaps Alpine; the other has heard of their effect in promoting homesickness; while a third considers the phrase as the name of a single tune and tells you that he has heard it. Two or three clear notions on the point will not be unwelcome to our musical friends.

In the patois of the Swiss the word *Ranz* signifies a row, line, or file, of moving bodies; and *Ranz-des-vaches* therefore means a *row or procession of cows*. "The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea." In the mountain pastures, the ideas of wealth, liberty, and pastoral joy are associated with the herd, and the lowing kine are beloved by the peasantry and made the subject of their song. The lays which bear this name are many in number, varying with the different cantons and districts, and the provincial dialects belonging to each. Some of the songs are in German and some in French. The most familiar is that beginning *Quand reverrai-je un jour*; which has been translated by Montgomery. But most of them are in the patois of the valleys, sometimes very like German, sometimes towards the south savouring strongly of the Italian or Romance. We shall say something first of the

## BOOKS AND BUSINESS.

## NO. III.

Another counsel, my dear B., you will soon learn to be indispensable: **LIMIT YOUR FIELD OF STUDY.** In hours resigned to unbending the mind, no such caution is required: you may then wander among varieties, as you stroll in your country garden, without selection or rule. But sometimes you go into your garden, not to stray among its hues and odours, but to handle the hoe, the dibble, the budding-knife and even the spade. Mental culture demands some reserve and demarcation, as truly as the tillage of the earth. On a small farm no wise man will try all sorts of crops. In a short lifetime no enlightened merchant will aim at universal knowledge. A few Bacons and Broughams there have been, who have dipped into every stream of human science; but most of us will wisely select a few. It is not less true of departments in learning, than I have shown it to be in books. You must sit down in quiet ignorance of many things, which are of importance. Hear the Father of Medicine: "Life is short, but Art is long." Pretending to everything makes smatterers. With certain modifications, to be hereafter noted, the rule will still hold, that in regard to the general cultivation of a private gentleman, a score of subjects may be set aside as out of the question. Making allowance for some strong penchant, of which anon, you may shut with bolt and bar a number of doors in the temple, as closely as Blue Beard's chamber. Spread the nets too widely, and you risk entire failure. Judicious reserve is here more difficult than you imagine, especially as providence has given you the means of satisfying your most extravagant wishes in regard to the purchase of books. But unless you close your eye to temptation, you will find yourself before long feasting your eyes on the backs, covers, and plates of your superb collection. You will enjoy the visits of scholars, who will enjoy and praise, and who de-



parting will mutter, "Fools make feasts and wise men eat them."

You will scarcely find life long enough to acquire new languages. You possess the French; beyond this I would recommend only so much Latin as you may learn by stealth. You will deny yourself the doctrine of curves, and all the higher mathematical analysis. A solid groundwork of physics and astronomy is within your reach. But where do you expect to find time for reading La Place, or experimenting on the Polarization of Light, or calculating the formation of epicycloids, exterior and interior? German metaphysics would fill up the entire spaces of your remaining lifetime. It is a great part of sound education to know what to reject. By ignorance of this, some men, otherwise not deficient, are daily making themselves ridiculous. Consider a moment, that neither you nor I lose caste, even among scholars, by avowing want of familiarity with the botanical nicetes of de Candolle or Schleiden, or the last work on Roman Law or Servian poetry. The evils are very small and not at all imminent, which are to be apprehended from the extreme of reserve and limitation. With your facilities you will easily enough break over the line, from any one of the cantons in which you professedly confine yourself: but to come back from expatiating—*hoc opus, hic labor est.*

As allied to the last, and auxiliary to it, suffer me to propose this precept: **REGULATE YOUR CHOICE OF BOOKS BY YOUR STUDIES, NOT YOUR STUDIES BY YOUR BOOKS.** A rule for the library as well as the study. Negligence of this makes observance of the preceding impossible. For instance; you have been some weeks making yourself familiar with two or three prime writers on political economy, and have their works before you; when you see at Putnam's or Penington's a splendid folio on the Orchidaceous Plants of South America. It is instantly ordered. Now, if you buy this for display, or for your guests, it is another matter: you have as much right to furnish with a twelve guinea book as with a candelabrum.

But if you meditate a new study, you have already spoiled all your foregoing plan. Next week the series will be interrupted by a dozen fresh volumes of French history, to be followed by works on metallurgy and coining. Even if the picture is highly coloured it is true. All men except the very poorest, are sometimes in this way. They cannot refrain from taking up a study because they have a book on it. What do I recommend as the opposite method? Simply this; that in all cases connected with your personal cultivation, you first determine on what you have to learn, and make this your guide in opening volumes. Otherwise you will only be one of ten thousand book proprietors, who dip here and dip there, know much of titles, prices, trade-sales, prefaces, engravings and indexes, but nothing symmetrical or full concerning any one science or art. Be liberal, if you please be lavish, in spreading your shelves with books for your family and your visitors, and indulge yourself in large accumulations for occasional relaxation, but when it comes to your own case and the tillage of your own mind, confine your reading to those books which pertain to the topic you have marked out for yourself. Every day somebody will tell you about some book which you have never read, as they will tell you of some fast horse that is owned by your neighbour; but what then? Mental powers of digestion are not infinite. No man tastes, still less devours, all the dishes on the table. Your private, treasured, darling cabinet of books should have sifted out from it every publication which is not demanded by some part of your prescribed plan. Keep separate apartments for the gorgeous array of volumes which you mean never to peruse. Unless your library is very small, it is no good reason for studying a book that you happen to possess it, and the true method is to seek the book for the sake of the study.

LET YOUR STUDIES LIE CHIEFLY IN THE FIELD APPROPRIATE TO THE AMERICAN GENTLEMAN. I say chiefly, to provide a postern through which to go out presently with some pet exceptions; and I say the "American" gentleman, not because

scholarship differs in essentials on the two sides of the Atlantic, any more than good-manners, but because there is a large class of most interesting and valuable topics, which are connected with our history, territory, constitution, jurisprudence, commerce, and arts. But there is a common ground of learned toil and pleasure, as distinguished from the particular cantons of certain arts and professions, and the nooks and corners of certain out-of-the-way students. Not every man is called upon to understand special-pleading, or surgery or engineering, or steam-machinery. Not every man is expected to be a bibliographer, or an observer of fossil infusoria, or an antiquary. But every instructed gentleman, whatever be his profession, is held to have some familiarity with General History, and above all with American History; with the common terms of Mental Philosophy; with Ethics in all its applications; with the Constitution of the United States, and the outline of English and American Law; with the principles of physical science; with elegant letters and poetry, and last not least with Revealed Religion. This is not an exhaustive catalogue, but it may serve as an illustration.

Let me earnestly recommend it to you as a rule, to CONSULT INDIVIDUAL TENDENCIES. This, you will agree, is a pleasant rule. It is only telling you to study most what you like best. For a professional course, it would be a sadly misleading precept; but with an amateur scholar the case is different. Every man has his penchant. We need not discuss the vexed question how much this is due to original genius, and how much to circumstances; the fact is obvious. There are certain branches for which you have no liking, or for which you have no fitness. Into such doors you may and must sometimes enter for a survey, but these are not the apartments in which to linger or dwell. For such studies as I am prescribing, Shakspeare's rule holds good.

Some little dipping into unaccustomed books will be neces-

sary, in order to discover to you your own capacity and even your own tastes. These sometimes reveal themselves late in life and unexpectedly. The richest veins are often struck in the most unlooked for quarters. Cato learned Greek in old age; and one of our sweetest poets has become one of our most profound geologists. But having once discovered what you can pursue with warmth and pleasure, you will be unwise—if it be a department of real knowledge—not to turn your steps in that direction. It may be mathematics, or philology or mechanics, or one of the inexhaustible fields of natural history, or philosophy or theology.

Cultivate a little enlargement of view, my Blanchard. Be a little pliant towards odd fellows like me who have odd pursuits: you will need such forbearance yourself when you get a little more gout and wrinkles. Do not think that there is no good travelling but on the macadamized high road of learning. There, it is true, all the regular coaches, heavy wagons, and trim parcel-vans and carts, go and return; it is their vocation. Law, medicine and divinity, run steadily in those deep ruts and among that gritty dust. But did you never observe little roads leading off from the great one, and sinuous lanes winding away to the upland, now lost in copses, now sunk away among the willows and alders which betray the latent brook, and now reappearing far off in snaky turns, till the thread of the pathway cuts through the gap of some blue distant range? Such are the by-paths of knowledge; and if you have found one that suits you well—cherish it. If so shady and retired that no one knows it—*tant mieux*. When you have lived awhile, you will battle with nobody, and sneer at nobody, for having an innocent crotchet in the way of study. There is Dr. Pillow, who clerk as he is, takes nevertheless to heraldry; a useless pursuit you will say; but it pleases him, and admits of connexion with many niceties of history. A learned bishop turns over his Latin poets and indites neat versions. Well, he cannot always sit in lawn, with his crozier in his hand. If you should catch me tinkering at a sun-

dial, or peeping for the new comet near *Bastaben* in *Drace*, you need not laugh; nor shall I, if I find you deep in the mysteries of *Des Cartes* and *Arnauld*. Stick to something. Discover a taste and talent for something. Make accumulations of knowledge in something. The common bond of science will conduct from this into other and higher matters. More important it is, be assured, for you, to awake with lively interest to any one innocent pursuit, in the way of learning, than to spend your life in trying this, trying that, and advancing in no one particular.

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#### TRANSLATION.

The characteristic fault of the fine writing of the eighteenth century is febleness of style, arising, in a great degree, from the disposition to avoid peculiar idioms, by merging them in those diluted forms of speech common to all languages. There is no stronger proof of Dr. Johnson's intellectual and moral strength than the energy by which his writings are distinguished, notwithstanding this immense disadvantage. It is not strength of style that gives or gave him influence, but strength of character and strength of mind, too great to be neutralized even by a style essentially weak from its unidiomatic insipidity. That the true source of the weakness is the one suggested, may be proved or corroborated by the fact, that the strong writers of the eighteenth century, with reference exclusively to strength of style—are eminently idiomatic in their diction, even those most distinguished for their learning, such as *Warburton* and *Bentley*. Pursuing the distinction which has just been taken between strength of thought or feeling and of style, it may be said without a paradox, that *Swift*, *De Foe*, and even *Goldsmith*, are *stronger writers* than *Johnson*, *Robertson*, and *Gibbon*. The influence of the

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A VISIT TO THE OLD HOUSE.

I had not revisited the home of my boyhood for forty years. It was moonlight, when I alighted from the stage-coach, within sight of the house in which I was born; and though I had determined to postpone my visit until the next day, there were some distant glimpses of towering elms and piles of building, which brought a world of recollections back upon me, and sent me to bed to dream all night of broken scenes from my boyish history. Ah! how deep are those impressions which are made in the child's soul while he is thinking only of his present sports and passing troubles!

Business of a more common-place and sordid character occupied me, among papers and receipt-books, till noon. I then prepared myself for a solitary visit to the home of my fathers; and I chose to approach it by the rear. Between the old garden and the river was a meadow. I had rolled in it, among the dandelions and buttercups, a thousand times: but the old nurse, who had been to me a mother, was long since dead. The cool clear spring was in the place where I left it; and the rill which wandered from it into the river was marked by an edging of greener grass. The fragrant mint along its borders came to my sense with associations of

## BOOKS AND BUSINESS.

## No. IV.

Though you will think I am repeating myself, here is another memorandum, for your study table; I am led to make a new point of it, by the train of thought just past: **BE SURE TO HAVE SOME ONE CHERISHED AND CONSTANT PURSUIT.** Other matters will occupy you now and then, but this is your regular beat. Hither you will return, after diversions to the right hand and the left. The experimental jaunts just now recommended will put you in the way of determining on this your chosen field; just as you drove over half a dozen counties, and inspected fifty spots, before you settled your mind as to your present country seat. You may intermit this study for months, but its attractions still hold; you come back to it; and after a few years will be astonished at your own progress. There are many advantages in having some one hive to which you may bring the pillage of all the meads and flower-gardens over which you skim. Close pursuance of one object is the only way which ensures method, system, and concatenation. The further off it lies from your professional thinking, the better. Thither you will fly, for coming years, to forget yourself after the rubs and annoyances of a sordid world. I am far from saying, that all branches of knowledge are equally valuable; but the least valuable, among those which are innocent, may be cultivated so as to afford more discipline of understanding and taste, than is to be acquired by the widest range over generalities; and the humblest of the sciences, when diligently pursued, conducts infallibly to higher tracts. He who begins with Bills of Exchange, finds himself shortly squaring off against the most formidable problems of political philosophy. A little toying with specimens in a *hortus siccus* brings you very soon to structural botany, organography, and the chemistry of vegetation. We cannot meddle for a year with the history of

socialism, without spreading your table with theories of Ethics. A sedulous examination of your atlases seduces you, before you are aware, into history, ethnography, and the philosophy of language. Which of these, or whether any of them, shall gain your love, it is not for me to predict. But you will deny yourself a main source of pleasure and inward growth if you do not attach yourself before long to some particular department of science or learning with a zeal and zest which lookers-on may brand as idly exclusive. Let down this heavy anchor, and you may roll upon the waves with a good degree of license as to other matters.

In guiding you, as far as I know how, towards a proper choice of subjects and authors, I am bound my dear Blanchard, to use the same frankness and honesty, which I should expect from you if I were to seek your advice about a transfer of funds. Every man ought to be best acquainted with his own business, and though there are some frightful exceptions, as of merchants who know nothing of trade, and schoolmasters who know nothing of grammar, the general principle still obtains. I dare not flatter therefore, any more than your attorney, on a consultation about balances. Be it known to you then that in a literary point of view, there is that in merchandize which is alien from the spirit of progress if not even opposed to it. Hence you cannot be offended when I say that an enlightened merchant will not neglect this direction: FAVOUR SOME KIND OF KNOWLEDGE WHICH LIES REMOTE FROM YOUR DAILY CALLING.

Merchandize has, in America, lost all that taint of vulgarity, which men of birth have endeavoured to detect in it, in England. The 'City' means something in London, which our merchant-princes find it hard to comprehend. A late pope requested an American clergyman in Rome, to make out for him a *carte* of gentlemen who should form a private party at the pontifical palace, but with this caveat, that *none of them should be engaged in trade*. This was a relic of the middle age; but it is a relic which lingers still in all baronial



halls. Europe however is so far becoming Americanized, that peers who talk of 'all the blood of all the Howard's' are constrained to know that all their quarterings will not give them the advantage over a Cobden, in the new state of society. But in America, or in those parts of it where men are most densely congregated, the mercantile man requires nothing but success, to place him in the highest rank. Where the wealthy merchant is at the same time an old one, he does indeed affect to play off towards younger men, however rich, a pinchbeck imitation of the hauteur which an Earl feels for a parvenu. The great principle however abides. American aristocracy is that of wealth, and people inquire every day less and less, by what door the money comes, whether through a bank, a mine, a lottery, a tallow-chandlery, or a raree-show. By reducing the expression to other terms, the worth of any object (man included) is that which it will bring. Now this article in the creed of "trade, the modern religion," as Walpole calls it, is rank heresy in the assemblies of learning, to be anathematized with bell, book, and candle. Hence I hold it good that any man who walks daily in the stir and smoke of 'Change should adjust his reading on the plan of counter-agents and antagonisms.

Enough of figures, economy, interest and premiums, in the day's work. Turn the soul, 'all too ruffled,' as Milton says, by these carnalities, to some other object. Read not of trade or mammon, even in its philosophy or most idealized form. Look towards the things which cannot be measured, weighed, inventoried, or priced. Think on my premises, and you will grant my conclusion, and adopt my regulation.

On the same grounds I would put my young master who has just come from Harvard, with an A. B., in his tin cylinder, and a nebula of German metaphysics obnubilating his brain, into the strait-jacket of economics; say at a counting-house desk. Double Entry would soon reduce his supposed transcendentalism to common sense. But what you need, after coming from the caldron of business, is a total transfer

of thought and feeling. You should flit if it may be into another sphere. If no higher motive occur, you should do this for relaxation. The ordinary trains of thought require to be snapped off short. You place your jaded plough-horse in a green pasture, where he may roll: do the like with your not less jaded self. The power of doing this effectually is one of the richest boons which is offered to business men by books. You have your choice out of a boundless circle, and may secure any degree of opposition to your terrestrial thoughts. In this voluntary exile from diurnal engagements you will soon learn to recognise the highest intellectual luxury. Under this head, I have preferred to deal in generalities; because the principle admits of divers applications, and because it is too important to be tied to any restrictions. But I will now indulge you with a specialty under this large counsel.

**YIELD YOURSELF TO THE ATTRACTIONS OF POETRY.** Merchants have been poets before now. A Nestor among living English bards is a well-known banker. Our own country can show that the Muses sometimes condescend to the haunts of gain. The pleasures of imagination are a fair counterpoise to the pleasures of mercantile adventure. For the reasons just expounded you will own that the advice is good for the mind's health. But the manner of carrying it out in practice deserves some consideration, lest you think of such a dealing in poetry as is far below the mark intended.

**GREAT POETS ARE TO BE STUDIED.** This means something more than opening a book of verses in a bay-window after dinner or reading aloud the rhymes of a newspaper. There is cause to fear that a large proportion of well bred gentlemen and ladies think themselves well enough acquainted with Shakspeare and Milton. An apt quotation, at second-hand, or a remembered scrap from the acted drama, goes for quite as much as they are worth. Let me respectfully assure these sensible persons, that a great poet is not to be exhausted in a perusal or two. There are regions unexplored, and

depths unsounded. A true poem is one of the highest products of genius and art. We do not finish it as one does an omelette or a water-ice, but return to it all our lives as to an Apollo or a Cathedral. The contemplation of such works is solemn and elevating; which led Charles Lamb to say in his inimitable way, where he is speaking of 'Grace before meat;' "Why have we none for books, those spiritual repasts—a grace before Milton—a grace before Shakspeare—a devotional exercise proper to be said said before reading the Faery Queen?" and in another place: "Milton almost requires a solemn service of music, to be played before you enter upon him. But he brings his music, to which, who listens, had need bring docile thoughts and purged ears."

In the course of a classical education we make our boys spend months over Homer and Virgil, beyond what is necessary for getting familiar with the Greek and Latin. Just as deserving of profound study are Spenser and Wordsworth, which however our youth use as a stop-gap. Even the difficulties, antiquities, allusions, and historical relations of the English bards demand an amount of consideration which is seldom bestowed. For want of this, many a Master of Arts, to say nothing of Doctors in Divinity, might be floored by hard questions in the common poets. Try the next one you meet, with as familiar a piece as *Il Penseroso*. Let him tell you who was 'the Attic boy.' See whether he is so well seen in Chaucer as to explain 'the story of Cambuscan bold;' above all, put him to his trumps for the name of the 'starred Ethiop queen.' But these are only puzzles on the surface. To commune with the spirit of a true poet, in his true inspiration—and they are few—is to rise above the ordinary plane of sentiment. Instead of being numbered among recreations, it should be accounted a high engagement of soul, to be expected, prepared for, and remembered. As I grow older, instead of leaving poetry behind me, as fit for boys, I love and reverence it more and more, as I do the ocean, mountains, sunsets, and starry heavens. Join the

refreshment of such studies with their sublime upliftings, and you attain the very highest solace for a weary mind which can be offered by aught that is sublunary; and I need not add, poetry sometimes takes a loftier flight and joins the angels near the throne of God.

If you concur with the spirit of this precept, you will find yourself going back to some books of your childhood, and conning passages from great authors which, after learning long ago, you had forgotten. On a noble work of genius, as on a cascade or a rainbow, you look with equal though somewhat varied delight the hundredth time. Studies which thus enhance the value of genuine beauties are good; and such I zealously recommend, especially to one who is immersed in the world's cares.

You so constantly remind me of your cares and avocations, that I am bound to annex a clause of counsel, which has perhaps suggested itself to you: PREFER THOSE STUDIES WHICH REQUIRE NO ARDUOUS PRELIMINARIES. When a man has limited time, he cannot brook delays, but is impatient to make the plunge at once. Hence I take it for granted you will not go to California till the tediousness of the voyages and travels on the way thither is removed. Several years of college-life are spent in laborious preparation for further work. This is one of the objects sought by the study of Greek and Latin; and the possession of these preliminaries is the grand advantage of a university-education. Now you do not expect to be a professional man, or what is called a man of letters. You wish to make the most of your existing means, and let me assure you this is not a little. But you desire neither to open entirely new ground and lay new foundations nor to lose the foundations you have laid. This is most reasonable.

There are certain sciences and arts which can scarcely be looked at, without a long previous training in certain other arts and sciences. In order to be an astronomer in the higher sense you must be versed in analytical mathematics.

In order to take the first step in the Differential and Integral Calculus, you must be exercised in Algebra. Before you can acquire any conception of argument in mechanical philosophy, you must be a geometer. To study the Scholastic Philosophy, or the politics of the Middle Ages, or the Civil and Canon Law, you need a thorough practice in the Latin tongue. All which serves to illustrate my rule; for no one of these branches could wisely be chosen for your private lucubrations.

There are however immeasurable tracts over which both you and I might expatiate for a life time, without getting in sight of their boundaries, and which demand, either no preparatory course beyond what has been pursued by every well-bred gentleman, or only such auxiliary particulars as will be suggested from time to time. It so happens that these topics are as useful as they are entertaining; for they connect themselves with the business of life, the formation of character, and the training of the heart. As I have said they are numerous, you will excuse me from naming them; but one or two specimens occur to my mind.

All that relates to the sublime study of the Human Mind, its phenomena, powers, nature and destiny, is profoundly interesting to a thoughtful man. From this delightful and necessary study, thousands have been deterred by the ill sound of a single unmeaning word—*metaphysics*. Still more have been disgusted by the absurd dialect and unintelligible jargon of certain pretenders, who have done all they could to throw the phenomena of the mind beyond the pale of observation and induction. I am however glad to believe that neither of these abuses can blind you to the obvious truth, that no study lies nearer to you than that of your rational and immortal part. Knowledge here is possible. You may not become a Leibnitz, an Edwards, or a Sir William Hamilton; but you may acquire such an acquaintance with your own faculties, and with the general current of opinion on philosophic subjects, as shall clarify all your subsequent

thinking, add exactitude to your language, and afford you a never-failing fund of inquiry and satisfaction as long as you live. Now for this noble, fascinating and boundless subject you need no line of preparation which you do not possess ; and might this very evening, if you chose, sit down with perfect comprehension, and I warrant it, with unexpected delight, to Dugald Stewart's Preliminary Essay, in which he gives a survey of the entire field.

Exactly the same remarks may be applied to the study of Morals ; only for Stewart read Macintosh, in a similar dissertation published both by itself and as a preliminary to the late editions of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. I may add—what has already gained your attention, Political Economy, the Science of Government, the Constitution of the United States, and all that we include under the borrowed phrase, *Belles Lettres*. These are instances ; they bring my meaning fully before your mind ; they open portals, high and wide, into which you may enter without a moment's delay. In selecting such, you will exercise a high economy, for you will be saving life. This moreover you will do, with the complacent thought that the sciences about which you are employing yourself are among the highest which can employ the human reason.

In turning over books on Philosophy and Ethics you will early be led to discover—you have discovered it long since—that by an imperceptible gradation they slide into another domain, which can never be shut off from a true inquirer as a sort of *terra incognita* ; I mean the field of Religious Truth. Would you renounce this as a thing for Sundays or the clergy ? As well might you so reject

“The warbling woodland, the resounding shore,  
The pomp of groves and garniture of fields,  
All that the genial ray of morning gilds,  
And all that echoes to the song of even,  
All that the mountain's sheltering bosom shields,  
And all the dread magnificence of heaven ;  
O how can'st thou renounce, and hope to be forgiven ?”

In quoting Beattie, I produce one who himself remark-

bly exemplifies the transition from philosophy to religion. In 1770 the professor and poet appeared as metaphysician, and I recommend to you his 'Essay on Truth' as one of the best introductions which you could have to the Philosophy of Religion. As a reasonable and immortal creature, I presume you to have some interest in the great questions of humanity; the immortality of the soul, the distinction of right and wrong, the possibility of a revelation, the proof of a Divine Being, the limits of Reason, the validity of Miracles and Prophecy, the history and authority of what we call the Bible, and the way for a sinner to be justified and saved. There is a class of merchants, I am aware, who care for none of these things. Trade is their religion; their creed has one article, radiant as the lone star of Texas, viz. *Gain is godliness*. For a fortune they would run any risk of being damned. Having attained a certain amount of dollars and observance, they relax in a slight degree, but with no bettering of their mental state. To such a one—(*vide* New York and Philadelphia *passim*) a book is a marketable article, worth so much. He reads a little, after dinner, but less and less; for the port tends to a more lethargic sort of refection. He trionizes sermons on the former part of the day, but in the evening he sleeps better at home. No question in theology disturbs him; so stocks are firm. If he can only be assured of such and such quotations, he cares not a snap of the finger for Moses and the Prophets. As his frown is felt in Wall Street, and his voice in bank-parlours, he looks down on a man of letters as he would on a bad customer from the South West. In his scale, Irving or Prescott or Wayland is valued precisely according to the last trade-sales. Conscious in his better moments that he is an ignoramus or a fool, he wraps himself in a feigned contempt of every question about an eternal world; till his gout in the stomach or his apoplexy brings him to the solution of all these problems. To this class neither you nor your chosen friends belong; and therefore I hazard nothing in offering to you as the noblest study

of your life the great topics of Theology. In the Holy Scriptures, and the works which illustrate and explain them, you will find inexhaustible founts of instruction and purity.

Among the subjects which demand no long preparatory learning and are therefore particularly suited to your circumstances there is another most extensive one. AFFORD A LARGE SPACE TO HISTORY. We may omit the thousand and one fine things which have been uttered about this branch of human knowledge. My labour here is lessened because the universal voice is loud in its favour. In no one department are there such vitality and increase as in this. The age is historical; to such a degree that in almost every country the most popular writers at this moment are historians. Essayists, Philosophers, poets and novelists have felt constrained to try their pens in narrative. As nearest home I need only name Bancroft, Prescott and Irving. Almost every kind of subject and every class of opinion and even results of every science are thrown into the shape of history. Here the books are innumerable. In French alone—as a language which you have at command—you see in your shelves, of recent authors, Caefigue, Villemain, Guizot, Mignet, Thiers, Lamartine, Michelet, to name no more. Where the attractions are so varied and the supply so great you will need some plan of study and principle of selection. Without this your reading of history will depreciate into a bootless ramble. With this caution I must leave the subject, which has been introduced only as illustrative of my general recommendation that you should prefer studies which require least preparation.

There is yet a subject which it would be unpardonable in me to omit, and it would be unwise to deny it a separate paragraph. LAY OUT YOUR STRENGTH UPON THE HOLY SCRIPTURES. The Bible is a book for every age and for all mankind. Do not fall into the vulgar errors which prevail even among men of learning and talents, in America; I



mean among second-rate men ; relies perhaps of that unutterably mean and shallow imposture, which under the title of French philosophy, seduced too many in high places during the times of Jefferson and Cooper, but which even on worldly grounds is rapidly becoming as discreditable as it was profane. Still there are lawyers, even in the Federal Court, who mis-quote Scripture, to show their textual ignorance, and decayed doctors, who continue innocently to sit on the materialistic egg, which all the world but themselves knows to have been addle years ago. Beware of the boyish notion that the Bible is a book to be read on Sundays or in the sick-room, or that you know all about it. The mistake is laughable. The infidel professors of Germany might teach you better. There it has been long since found out, that the plebeian infidelity of Paine and Volney was too foul and dis-tempered to live, after the drying up of the kennel in which it was spawned ; they have changed it for a creation not less dangerous but more ethereal. Men of no pretensions to piety there study the Hebrew and Greek originals, lecture upon them, and fill the book fairs with their learned volumes. What does this show ? Not that we ought to emulate their indifference ; but assuredly, that the Bible, regarded as an object of intellectual research, is rich and inexhaustible. It was so regarded by Grotius, the elegant classic and sage of public laws ; by Newton, whose impress is visible on every page of modern astronomy ; by Pascal, whose geometry came to him as by intuition, and whose argumentative wit still rankles under the robe of the Jesuit ; by Hale, the learned and incorruptible judge ; and by Euler the subtle analyst. The Holy Scriptures may well engage your daily efforts ; they will not be exhausted in a single lifetime. They connect themselves, by a most natural transition, with every one of the departments I have recommended. Their value is of the highest degree, on grounds merely scientific and literary, but they have a value pertaining to no other books, and derived from the reflections of the other world.

If it were proper, I could grace this page with brilliant instances of men in our own country, as well in trade as in the professions, who find a harbour from the storms of life in the tranquil joys of religious study. For instance, I might point to a distinguished judge, who amidst a library enriched with many languages, enjoys researches into the sacred tongues; a venerable lawyer, long among acknowledged leaders in our greatest city, who reposes on his laurels only to draw refreshment from theological lucubration; and a retired merchant, whose name is already foremost in one school of prophetic interpretation. All the signs foretoken a day as very near, when it shall be hardly credible that there was a period in which any pretender to learning could venture to ignore the oldest of all human documents, or to sneer at the inspiration of the Almighty.

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### THE RICHES OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

I confess with shame that I long cherished an illiberal prejudice against English dictionaries. Nothing could induce me to purchase either Walker, Webster, or Worcester. I could not see the use of a big book to tell me what I knew so well already. At length I found myself shut up, in a country tavern, without any reading but a quarto Webster, left there by a travelling agent in pawn or payment of his board and lodging. The forced perusal of this admirable work produced an entire change in my opinions, and imparted new ideas with respect to the riches of our noble language. But the pleasure afforded by this discovery was not unmingled with pain. I felt a growing uneasiness that so many fine expressive words should be entirely disused, and I resolved to get up a new "cause," by making "special efforts" to bring every dictionary word into common use. How different a diction would prevail, not only at the bar and in the pulpit,