Rev. W. JONES'S
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LETTERS

FROM

A TUTOR TO HIS PUPILS.

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM JONES,

OF NAYLAND.

"Teaching we learn."—*Young.*

MDCCCXXI.

Quod enim munus reipublicæ afferre majus, meliusve possumus, quam si docemus atque erudimus juventutem? his præsertim moribus atque temporibus, quibus ita prolapsa est, ut omnium opibus refrenanda ac coërcenda sit.

Cicero.

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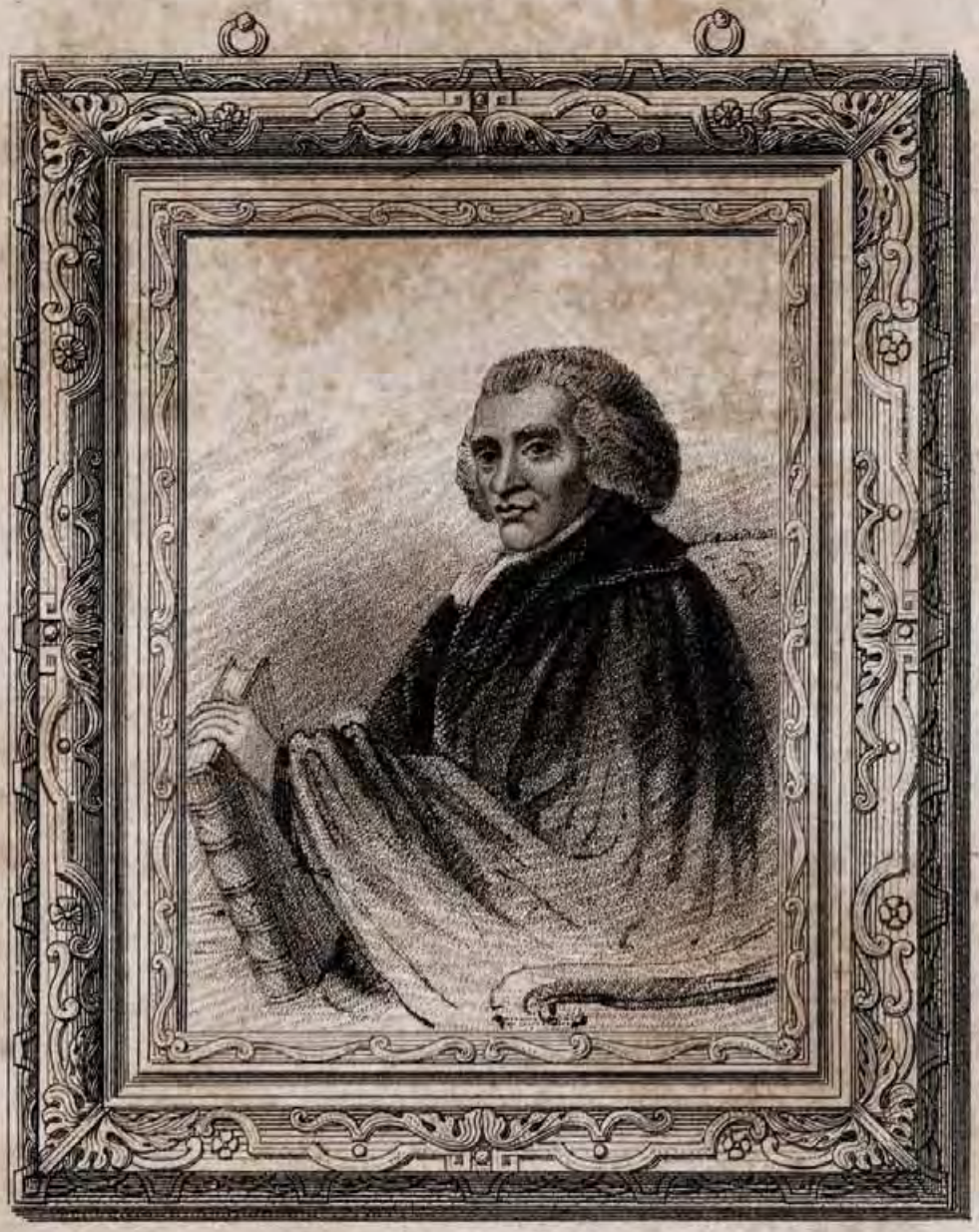
REV. Wm JONES'S LETTERS

TO HIS PUPILS.



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PREFACE.

THE Author of the following Letters having endeavoured to make himself as useful as he could in the execution of an important trust, not only by reading books with his pupils, and teaching sciences, but by conversing freely with them, as occasion required, on literary and moral subjects; he took frequent opportunities of committing to paper, in the form of a letter, the substance of what had passed in these conversations. And as all young people of the same station have a common interest in most of the subjects thus treated of, he thought it might be of service to select a few of these letters, and send them to the press; that when he has put them into the hands of his own pupils (for whose use they were intended), he may have the honour of addressing himself as a friendly monitor and guide to other young travellers, who are upon the same road to learning and virtue; and have many dangers to encounter, from the fervour of youth, their own inexperience, and the overbearing influence of ill principles and bad examples.

Though some copies of these letters were gone out of his hands, and he was solicited by his friends to the publication, he lays no stress upon these considerations: his only motive is the desire of making an experiment for the benefit of youth; and if this little volume should be found capable of answering, in any degree, so desirable an end, it will be

accepted by such parents and teachers, as wish not only to cultivate the understanding of their scholars (which perhaps is their first object), but to secure them against the errors and miscarriages to which they are more particularly exposed in the present age; and to such he begs leave to recommend it for their patronage and protection. If his design should meet with the approbation of those who are the proper judges, he may be encouraged to send abroad hereafter another volume upon the same plan.

REV. W. JONES'S

LETTERS.

I.

ON A TEACHABLE DISPOSITION.

WOLFE instructed his soldiers, that if the French should land in Kent, as they were then expected to do, actual service in that enclosed country would show them the reason of several evolutions, which they had never been able to comprehend.* The soldier, therefore, submits to learn things of which he does not see the use. And is not every learner under the same obligation? If he desires to be taught, must not he bring with him that teachable disposition, which receives the rules and elements of learning implicitly, and trusts to the future for the knowledge of those reasons on which they are grounded? This is not a matter of choice: he can be taught on no other principle; for though the practice of a rule may seem very easy, the reason of that rule will generally lie too deep for a beginner;

* See General Wolfe's Instructions, p. 51. second edition.

and long experience will be necessary before it can be understood: indeed, there are many rules established, for which we have no reason but experience. If a learner will take his own judgment concerning the propriety of what is proposed to him, before he is capable of judging rightly, he will cheat himself, and preclude his future improvement: at best, he will lose a great deal of time, and go the farthest way about; and, which is the greatest misfortune, he will contract bad habits in the beginning, and perhaps find himself unfit to be taught, when he would be glad to learn. I have seen some examples of young persons, who have been disappointed by trusting at first to their own shallow conceptions, and supposing, what is very pleasant in idea, that Nature may be a master before it has been a scholar. If the consequences of this error are so bad in arts, and sciences, and matters of accomplishment, they will be much worse in those things which relate to the economy of human life.

It is indeed a very dangerous mistake to imagine, that the mind can be cultivated, and the manners formed, on any principle but that of dependence; and, therefore, we cannot sufficiently lament, that this wholesome and necessary doctrine is growing every day more and more out of fashion. Nothing is now to be taken upon authority. A wild and absurd system is prevailing, which encourages the depravity of nature, by admitting, that nothing is to be complied with by young people, of which they do not see the propriety: though it is morally impossible they should see it in many cases, till they look back upon the past time with eyes that are opened

by years and experience: and thus we are nursing up a spirit of petulance and mutiny, which can never fail to render the labour of cultivation very disagreeable to the teacher. Some parents, who, through a natural partiality, are willing to have it thought that their children are prodigies of forwardness and acuteness, consult their opinions, and argue with them, under a persuasion that their own reason will direct them, before they know the difference between good and evil. To argue with a child, who is to do as he is bid, is to take him out of his sphere, and to put him upon a level with his father. In some cases, where there is an unaspiring quiet temper, this may possibly succeed: but with a mercurial disposition, the experiment is always dangerous: for what is the issue? He is reasoned with: he reasons again, and, perhaps, though he has the wrong side of the question, he may possibly have the better of the argument in the hearing of others; while the father, who is in the right, and ought in duty to persist, is silenced, and gives up the point, partly from vanity, and partly from affection. What can follow, but that the authority of the father will fall by degrees into contempt? and what he loses in authority, the child will gain in conceit and impertinence, till he will do nothing without a reason, and seldom with; for he thinks his own reasons better. As he grows up, he carries his impertinence with him into company, whom he interrupts, by giving his judgment on all occasions, and upon subjects, of which he has only so much knowledge as qualifies him to be troublesome. The case is very unhappy, if we consider it so far only as his conversation is concerned; because wiser

people will find themselves disgusted with his company, and avoid it. But when this untutored confidence is extended to moral action, the consequences, which were disagreeable enough before, now become dreadful: and I fear it has been but too justly remarked, that the loose system of education adopted by some mistaken parents, on the recommendation of some enthusiastic philosophers, has produced a new generation of libertines, some of whom are such monsters of ignorance, insolence, and boundless profligacy, as never existed before in a Christian country. How far this observation may be applicable to the softer sex, it is not my business to inquire. Parents live to see the consequences of their mistake, when they can only lament the opportunity they have lost. Besides, the method is radically absurd and unnatural in itself; it is contrary to that rational order which does and must prevail in all other cases of the kind. The raw recruit learns his exercise, on the authority of his officer, because he knows nothing as yet of the art of war, and he waits for the reasons of it till he comes into action. The patient commits himself to the physician, consenting to a regimen which is against his appetites, and taking medicines, of which he knows neither the names nor the qualities; and while nature is ready to rebel at the taste of them. The Lacedemonians carried this doctrine to such excess, that they obliged their Ephori to submit to the ridiculous ceremony of being shaved when they entered upon their office, for no other end, but that it might be signified by this act, that they knew how to practise submission to the laws of their country. In short, it is an established and universal law, that

he who will gain any thing, must give up something; he that will improve his understanding, his manners, or his health, must contradict his will. This may be hard; but it is much harder to offer up wisdom, happiness, and perhaps even life itself, as a sacrifice to folly. So that after all the high flights and fancies of philosophic fanaticism, you may rest satisfied, there is no rule of education that has common sense in it, but the old-fashioned and almost exploded doctrine of authority on one side, and dependence on the other. He that will have liberty without discretion, will lose more than he gains: he will escape from the authority of others, to be devoted to his own ignorance, and enslaved by his own passions, which are the worst tyrants upon earth.

A gentleman appointed to a government abroad, consulted an eminent person, who was at that time the oracle of the law, as to the rule of his future conduct in his office, and begged his instructions. "I take you," said he, "for a man of integrity; and, therefore, the advice I must give you in general, is, to act in all cases according to the best of your judgment: however, I have this one rule to recommend; never give your reasons: you will gain no ground that way, and perhaps bring yourself into great difficulties by attempting it. Let your reasons be those of an honest man, and such as you can answer; but never expose them to your inferiors, who will be sure to have their reasons against yours; and while reason is litigated, authority is lost, and the public interest suffers." I mention the advice of this famous politician, to show you that the wisest of men, and the undoubted

friends of political liberty, are obliged in practice to adopt the principle which I have been explaining to you: so that when children resign themselves to the direction of their parents and tutors, who are bound by affection and interest to promote their happiness, and will take pleasure in showing them the reason of things at a proper season, they do but follow the example of all communities of men in the world, who are passive for their own good; who are under laws, which not one in five hundred of them understands; and submit to actions, of which they are not able to see either the propriety or the equity: and if children are treated as men are, no indignity is offered, and they have nothing to complain of. Your own sense will assure you, upon the whole, that society cannot subsist, nor any business go forward, without subordination; and the experience of all ages will teach you, when you come to be better acquainted with it, that the dissolution of authority is the dissolution of society. In the mean time, consider the wisdom and happiness which is found among a swarm of bees; a pattern to all human societies. There is perfect allegiance, perfect subordination: no time is lost in disputing or questioning; but business goes forward with cheerfulness at every opportunity, and the great object is the common interest. All are armed for defence, and ready for work; so that in every member of the community the two characters of the soldier and the labourer are united. If you look to the fruit of this wise economy, you find a store of honey for them to feed upon when the summer is past, and the days of labour are finished. Such, I hope, will be the fruit of your studies.

II.

ON GOOD MANNERS.

PROPRIETY of behaviour in company is necessary to every gentleman; for, without good manners, he can neither be acceptable to his friends, nor agreeable in conversation to strangers.

The three sources of ill manners are pride, ill nature, and want of sense; so that every person who is already endowed with humility, good nature, and good sense, will learn good manners with little or no teaching.

A writer, who had great knowledge of mankind, has defined good manners as *the art of making those people easy with whom we converse;* and his definition cannot be mended. The ill qualities abovementioned, all tend naturally to make people uneasy. Pride assumes all the conversation to itself, and makes the company insignificant. Ill-nature makes offensive reflections; and folly makes no distinction of persons and occasions. Good manners are therefore in part negative: let but a sensible person refrain from pride and ill nature, and his conversation will give satisfaction.

So far as good manners are positive, and related to good breeding, there are many established forms, which are to be learned by experience and conversation in the world. But there is one plain rule, worth all the rest added together; that a person who pretends to the character and behaviour of a gentleman, should do every thing with *gentleness;* with an easy, quiet, friendly manner, which doubles

the value of every word and action. A forward, noisy, importunate, overbearing way of talking, is the very quintessence of ill breeding: and hasty contradiction, unseasonable interruption of persons in their discourse, especially of elders or superiors, loud laughter, winkings, grimaces, and affected contortions of the body, are not only of low extraction in themselves, but are the natural symptoms of self-sufficiency and impudence.

It is a sign of great ignorance to talk much to other people, of things in which they have no interest; and to be speaking familiarly by name of distant persons, to those who have no knowledge of them. It shows that the ideas are comprehended within a very narrow sphere, and that the memory has but few objects.

If you speak of any thing remarkable in its way, many inconsiderable people have a practice of telling you something of the same kind, which they think much more remarkable. If any person in the company is commended for what they do, they will be instantly telling you of somebody else whom they know, who does it much better; and thus a modest person, who meant to entertain, is disappointed and confounded by another's rudeness. True gentility, when improved by good sense, avoids every appearance of self-importance; and polite humility takes every opportunity of giving importance to the company; of which it may be truly said, as it was of worldly wealth, "it is better to give than to receive." In our commerce with mankind, we are always to consider, that *their* affairs are of more concern to *them*, than our's are; and we should treat them on this principle, unless we are occasionally questioned, and directed to our-

selves by the turn of the conversation. Discretion will always fix on some subject in which the company have a common share. Talk not of music to a physician, nor of medicine to a fiddler; unless the fiddler should be sick, and the physician at a concert. He that speaks only of such subjects as are familiar to himself, treats his company as the stork did the fox, presenting an entertainment to him in a deep pitcher, out of which no creature could feed but a long-billed fowl.

The rules I have laid down are such as take place chiefly in our conversation with strangers: among friends and acquaintance, where there is freedom and pleasantry, daily practice will be attended with less reserve. But here let me give you warning, that too great familiarity, especially if attended with roughness and importunity, is always dangerous to friendship, which must be treated with some degree of tenderness and delicacy, if you wish it to be lasting. You are to keep your friend by the same behaviour that first won his esteem: and observe this, as a maxim verified by daily experience—that men advance themselves more commonly by the lesser arts of discretion, than by the more valuable endowments of wit and science; which, without discretion to recommend them, are often left to disappointment and beggary.

The earl of Chesterfield has given many directions, which have been much admired of late years; but his rules are calculated to form the petit maitre, the debauchee, or the insidious politician, with whom it would be totally unprofitable, and even dangerous, to converse. My late friend, the learned Dr. Delany, at the end of his anonymous Observa-

tions on Lord Orrery's Remarks, published a short original discourse of Swift on Good Manners, which contains more to the purpose in one page of it, than you will find in the whole volume of the courtly earl, so highly applauded by ignorant people for his knowledge of the world.

We are apt to look upon good manners as a lighter sort of qualification, lying without the system of morality and Christian duty; which a man may possess or not possess, and yet be a very good man. But there is no foundation for such an opinion: the apostle St. Paul hath plainly comprehended it in his well-known description of *charity*, which signifies the *friendship of Christians*, and is extended to so many cases, that no man can practise that virtue, and be guilty of ill manners. Show me the man, who in his conversation discovers no signs that he is *puffed up* with pride; who never behaves himself *unseemly*, or with impropriety *; who neither *envies* nor censures; who is *kind* and *patient* toward his friends; who *seeketh not his own*, but considers others rather than himself, and gives them the preference; I say, that man is not only all that we intend by a gentleman, but much more: he really is, what all artificial courtesy affects to be, a philanthropist, a friend to mankind; whose company will delight while it improves, and whose good will rarely be evil spoken of. Christianity, therefore, is the best foundation of what we call good manners; and of two persons, who have equal knowledge of the world, he that is the best Christian will be the best gentleman.

* Ασχημονως.

III.

ON TEMPERANCE.

A HEALTHY body and a sedate mind are blessings, without which, this life, considered in itself, is little better than a punishment: and you should reflect on this while you are young, before intemperance has brought you into bondage; for it will be too late to persuade, when the judgment is depraved and weakened by ill habits. The epicure, by attempting to make too much of this life, shortens its period, and lessens its value. Instead of being the life of a man, it is scarcely so much as the life of a beast; for most beasts know when to be satisfied.

I have been led into these reflections by seeing in the newspapers the death of Gulosus, a country gentleman in the west of England, a man of good parts, a friendly disposition, and agreeable conversation. He was naturally of a strong constitution, and might have lasted to a good old age; but he is gone before his time, through an error in opinion, which has destroyed more than the sword. The sports of the field, to which he was much addicted, procured him a great appetite; and by the favour of a neighbour, who had the merit of keeping a full table, he had daily opportunities of gratifying it at an easy rate. He asked a friend, how much port a man might drink without hurting himself? This question was put to a valetudinarian, who gave it as his private opinion, that a pint in a day was

more than would do any man good. "There," says he, "you and I differ; for I am convinced that one bottle after dinner will never hurt any man that uses exercise." Under this persuasion, he persevered in his custom of eating and drinking as much as he could; though the excess of one day obliged him to take a large dose of rhubarb the next; so that his life was a continual struggle between fulness and physic, till nature was wearied out, and he sunk all at once, at the age of forty, under the stroke of an apoplexy. When nature fails in a strong man, the change is often very sudden. I, who am obliged to live by rule, and am hitherto alive beyond hope, have seen the end of many younger and stronger men, who have unhappily presumed upon their strength, and have persevered in a constant habit of eating and drinking without any reserve, till their digestive powers have failed, and their whole constitution has been shattered; so that either death, or incurable infirmity, has been the consequence.

What can be the reason, why the French people are so much less troubled with distempers, and are so much more lively in their spirits, than the English? A gentleman of learning, with whom I had the pleasure of conversing at Paris, made this observation on the subject: "You English people give no rest to your faculties: you take three meals every day, and live in constant fulness, without any relief: thus nature is overcharged, crudities are accumulated in the vessels of the body, and you fall early into apoplexies, palsies, insanity, or hopeless stupidity. Whereas, if we are guilty of any excess, our meagre days, which are two in a week, bring us

into order again; and if these should be insufficient, the season of Lent comes in to our relief, which is pretty sure to answer the purpose."

It is much to be lamented, and we are suffering for it in mind and body, that in these latter days of the reformation, we have been so dreadfully afraid of superstition, that we have at length discarded every wholesome and necessary regulation; and because we do not whip our skins, like the monks of antiquity, we stuff them till they burst. The consumption of animal food in England is by far too great for the enjoyment of health, and the public good of the community. The price of provisions becomes much more unreasonable; our fishery is neglected; and no one benefit arises, but that of putting money into the pockets of physicians and lawyers; which they never fail to do, who, with constant fulness, are sick in their bodies, and quarrelsome in their tempers. The calendar of the church of England, which is moderate enough in its restrictions, would be of infinite service to us, if it were duly observed. I once met with a wise and good man, far advanced in years, and of an infirm constitution, who assured me he neither used nor wanted any other physician. If we were to adopt his rule, nature would have that seasonable relief which is necessary; our health and our spirits would be better; suicide, a growing and tremendous evil, would be less frequent; our fishery would have better encouragement—a matter of no small weight to a maritime people, whose navigation is their natural defence; provisions would be cheaper; the nation in general would be wiser; and perhaps we should also have a better claim to the blessing

of Heaven, if we showed a more pious regard to the wholesome regulations of the Christian church; which are now so shockingly neglected, that our feasts and merry-meetings are on Wednesdays and Fridays (perhaps on Good-Friday itself), when our forefathers of the reformation, who kept up to what they professed, were praying and fasting.

The time hath come upon many great nations, when ill principles and self indulgence, and that infatuation which is the natural consequence of both, have brought them to ruin; and in all appearance that time is now coming upon us. I am persuaded we have sunk more hastily into universal corruption, from the sanctified fastings of our Puritans in the days of Cromwell—whose rapine and violence, when compared with their affected mortifications, brought a scandal upon all the forms and appearances of religion. Yet such has been our destiny, that while we have dropped the most religious of their practices, we have taken up with the worst of their principles, and are now suffering under the natural effects of them.

IV.

ON DIVERSIONS.

It is laid down as a principle of action by most young people of fortune, that there is no enjoyment of life without diversion: and this is now carried to such excess, that pleasure seems to be the great object which has taken place of every other. The mistake is very unhappy, as I intend to show, by

taking the other side of the question, and proving that there is no enjoyment of life without work.

The words commonly used to signify play, are these four—relaxation, diversion, amusement, and recreation. The idea of relaxation is taken from a bow, which must be unbent when it is not wanted, to keep up its spring: diversion signifies a turning aside from the main purpose of a journey, to see something that is curious and out of the way: amusement means an occasional forsaking of the Muses, when a student lays aside his books: recreation is the refreshing of the spirits when they are exhausted with labour, so that they may be ready in due time to resume it again. From these considerations, it follows, that the idle man, who has no work, can have no play; for how can he be relaxed who is never bent? how can he turn out of the road, who is never in it? how can he leave the Muses, who is never with them? how can play refresh him, who is never exhausted with business?

When diversion becomes the business of life, its nature is changed. All rest presupposes labour; and the bed is refreshing to a weary man: but when a man is confined to his bed, he is miserable, and wishes himself out of it. He that has no variety can have no enjoyment; he is surfeited with pleasure, and, in the better hours of reflection, would find a refuge in labour itself. And, indeed, I apprehend there is not a more miserable, as well as a more worthless being, than a young man of fortune who has nothing to do but to find some new way of doing nothing. A sentence is passed upon all poor men, that if they do not work they shall not eat; and it takes effect, in part, against the rich, who,

if they are not useful, in some respect, to the public, are pretty sure to become burthensome to themselves. This blessing goes along with every useful employment; it keeps a man upon good terms with himself, and consequently in good spirits, and in a capacity of pleasing, and being pleased with every innocent gratification. As labour is necessary to procure an appetite to the body, there must also be some previous exercise of the mind to prepare it for enjoyment; indulgence on any other terms is false in itself, and ruinous in its consequences; mirth degenerates into senseless riot, and gratification soon terminates in corruption.

If we compare the different lots of mankind, we shall find that happiness is much more equally distributed than we are apt to think, when we judge by outward appearance. The industrious poor have, in many respects, more enjoyment of life than the idler sort of gentry, who, by their abuse of liberty and wealth, fall into temptations and snares; and in the immoderate pursuit of imaginary pleasures, find nothing in the end but real bitterness. The remedy of all is in this short sentence: "to be useful, is to be happy." If Eugenio had followed the profession for which his father intended him, he might now have been alive, and a happy member of society: but his father dying when he was young, he used his liberty (as he called it), and threw himself upon the world as a man of leisure with a small fortune. His idleness exposed him to bad company, who were idle like himself; they led him into extravagance; extravagance led him to gambling, as a last resort for the repairing of his fortune; but it had a contrary

effect, and completed his ruin: his disappointments made him quarrelsome, and a quarrel brought on a duel, in which he lost his life at five-and-twenty. In this short account of Eugenio you have the history of many young men of this age, who are bewitched with the ideas of liberty and pleasure; but with this difference—that some are destroyed by others, and some destroy themselves.

The progress is much the same with a nation as with an individual: when they rise from poverty, activity, and industry, to improvement, ease, and elegance, they sink into indolence and luxury, which bring on a fever and delirium; till having quarrelled among themselves, and turned their swords against one another, they fall by a sort of political suicide, or become a prey to some foreign enemy.

V.

ON NOVELS.

When you read for amusement, let your mind be turned as much as possible to the real transactions of human life, as they are represented and commented upon by wise and faithful historians; and beware of throwing away your time, as too many now do, by giving yourself up to trifling works of imagination, of which there is a deluge in the present age, to the subversion of common sense, and the general corruption of our principles and morals.

While I was in the shop of a sensible bookseller in the country, a young man presented himself, who came for some volumes of a novel. As soon as he had turned his back, "Sir," said the bookseller, "our trade is now, in a manner, reduced to this one article of letting out novels: that young man has read half the novels in my collection; and when he has finished his studies, by reading the other half, the ignorance he brought into my shop would have done him more good than the knowledge he will carry out of it." Many other occurrences have led me to reflect on this fashion, which has increased so much of late years, as nearly to swallow up all other reading—like the lean kine of Pharaoh, which swallowed up all the fat ones, and did not look the better for it.

Consider, therefore, before your judgment is corrupted, that most novels are exceedingly lean in their matter, to say the best of them: many of them are the cold productions of people who write for the fashion (with as much indifference as milliners make caps), without any materials worth communicating. Others are the offspring of a rambling fancy, which puts together a string of incidents, not one degree above the tea-table, and of no more real concern than if they were to hold you by the ears, as some tiresome people do, with an account of their dreams: indeed, many of them are but the waking dreams of those who know neither the world nor themselves. Many of them also are mean imitations, which affect the style and manner of more successful compositions. Some of them are void of all regular design, and made up of

heterogeneous parts, which have no dependence upon one another.

——— late qui splendeat unus et alter
Assuitur pannus ———

And thus they become like the party-coloured jacket of a fool upon the stage of a mountebank, who sets the rabble a-gape with the low and insipid wonders he has collected, to detain them in his company, and draw the money out of their pockets.

It were well if the reading of novels were nothing worse than the loss of time and money, though this is bad enough; but young people will not escape so: it has generally a bad effect upon the mind, and, in some instances, a fatal effect upon the morals and fortune. In novels, plays, and romances (for they have all the same general object, which is amusement), good and evil are disguised by false colourings and unjust representations: the end is to please; and how is this end to be obtained? Nothing will please loose people but intrigues and loose adventures; nothing will please the unlettered profligate but blasphemous sneers upon religion and the Holy Scriptures; nothing will please the vicious but the palliation of vice and the contempt of virtue: therefore, novelists and comic writers, who study popularity, either for praise or profit, mix up vice with amiable qualities, to cover and recommend it; while virtue is compounded with such ingredients, as have a natural tendency to make it odious. These tricks are put upon the public every day, and they take those for their benefactors who thus impose upon them.

But novels vitiate the taste, while they corrupt the manners: through a desire of captivating the imagination, they fly above nature and reality; their characters are all overcharged, and their incidents boil over with improbabilities and absurdities. The imagination, thus fed with wind and flatulence, loses its relish for truth, and can bear nothing that is ordinary: so that the reading of novels is to the mind, what dram-drinking is to the body; the palate is vitiated, the stomach is squeamish, the juices are corrupted, the digestion is spoiled, and life can be kept up only by that which is supernatural and violent. The gamester, who accustoms himself to violent agitations, can find no pleasure unless his passions are all kept upon the stretch, like the rigging of a ship in a storm: his amusement is in racks, tortures, and even madness itself: and such is the taste of those who habituate their imaginations to the flights and extravagances of modern romances.

It is a certain proof that a nation is become degenerate in sense, in learning, in economy, in morals, and in religion, when they are running thus after shadows, and neglecting all that is useful and valuable in life. The polite author of the Travels of Cyrus, describing the state of the Medes when their empire was declining, gives a lively picture of that literary corruption which is the never-failing attendant upon luxury and a dissolution of morals: "Solid knowledge was looked upon as contrary to delicacy of manners; agreeable trifling, fine-spun thoughts, and lively sallies of imagination, were the only kinds of wit admired there: no sort of writing pleased but amusing fictions; where a perpetual

succession of events surprised by their variety, without improving the understanding, or ennobling the heart."

I have sometimes been struck with the reflection, that few writers, who forge a series of events, look upon their attempt in a serious light, and consider the hazard of the undertaking; how they are in continual danger of giving us false notions of the consequences of human actions, and of misrepresenting the ways of Divine Providence; for the ways of men, so far as they are passive under the consequences of their own actions, are the ways of God. When we confine ourselves to real life, and are content with describing facts, with the consequences that actually followed them, we may be unable to trace the designs of Providence—but then we do not misrepresent them; and the time will come when God will be justified in all those complicated events, which we are unable now to reconcile with the known laws of justice and goodness. But when we dare to settle the fate of imaginary characters, we take the providence of God out of his hands, assuming an office for which no man is fit, and in which he cannot miscarry without some danger to himself and others. For example—a writer may even mean well, and yet, through shortsightedness and mistake, may bring virtue into distress, under such circumstances, as Providence, perhaps, never did nor will, and thereby may bring discouragements upon virtue, and even throw it into despair; he may give to vice that success which it never had, nor will have, so long as God governs the world.

To counterbalance this danger, lord Bacon observes, that, "in works of imagination there is liberty of representing virtue and vice in their proper colours, with their proper rewards; and to correct, as it were, the common course of things, and satisfy the principles of justice, by which the mind of a reader is influenced." In this respect, works of genius have an advantage above real history, and may be admitted, provided the writer himself is of sound judgment, and influenced by principles of truth and justice.

If, when you have weighed these things together, you should suspect that I have been too nice and severe, consider that it is better to err on the side of caution and prudence; and that I may say for myself, what the apostle said upon a like occasion, "I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy."

Upon the whole, life is a serious thing, and all events are at God's disposal; and as the good and evil of this world, transient and momentary as it is, stands connected with the good and evil of the next, which is perpetual, it is dangerous to trifle with it, as they are tempted to do, who address themselves only to the passions of men, without having any principles of truth and justice to restrain them.

I do not say, that you should abstain from all fiction, as such; for there is much profitable fiction. I could name several things which you may read in this way with safety and improvement: Gil Blas is a romance of the first class, in excellent French, distinguished by many capital strokes of good sense and original wit; the narrative of Rolando, the

captain of the robbers, when we consider the character and profession of the person who delivers it, is one of the highest-wrought satires upon the follies of parental indulgence in education that is any where to be met with. I mean, therefore, to give you warning, that as fiction is now managed in plays and novels, it is proper to be upon your guard against it. And let me caution you against all such productions of wit as make too free with religion, even with the errors of it: the mind, by sporting with great subjects, will be accustomed to make dishonourable associations, and to lose much of that seriousness and veneration which is due to things of eternal moment. I question whether any man can read Swift's Tale of a Tub, or Don Quevedo's Visions, without finding himself the worse for it. In regard to all such indiscreet applications of wit, every young student may guard his mind and rectify his judgment, by reading Mr. Collier's View of the Profaneness and Immorality of the English Stage; a book, which brought Dryden himself to repentance, and does indeed beggar every work upon the same argument: it is the triumph of wit over scurrility; of piety over profaneness; of learning over ignorance; and of Christianity over atheism.

There is a practice common with our fabulists, moralists, and romance writers, which is contrary to fact and nature, and therefore is absurd in itself, while it is disrespectful and injurious to true religion, though it wonderfully captivates the fancy of some people, who admire what is exotic, without considering whether it is reasonable. Our writers

have a favourite practice of recommending wisdom and morality, and many admirable virtues, to Christian readers, in a Turkish dress; but is it not dishonest to give to the Koran the honour of those sentiments, and that illumination, which the author himself derived from a higher source? It ought to raise our indignation to see the imagery, eloquence, and purity of the Scripture, giving dignity to the antichristian spirit of Mahometan infidels. This is an offence of the same kind with what some learned critics have supposed to have been prohibited under the terms of the third commandment, "Thou shalt not apply the name of God to a vanity, that is, to a heathen idol." For it seems not much less injurious to take the pure and exalted doctrines of the Christian philosophy, and put them into the mouths of narrow-minded, barbarous, bigotted, malicious, illiterate Mussulmen, by supposing them to talk and moralize in the superior strain of a well-informed Christian; and to invigorate their speech with the powers of learning, like classical scholars who have studied oratory and elegance all their lives—though the Turk is a professed enemy to literature. This plan exposes us to another inconvenience; that if we speak in character, we must speak with veneration of the religion of Mahomet, and call it "our most holy faith;" and the impostor who invented it must be "our holy prophet;" which, though it is but fiction, yet such is the weakness of the human mind, and the force of custom, that we may tell lies, or hear them told, till we believe them; and speak respectfully of Mahomet, till we think but meanly of the Gospel.

The Adventurer has great merit as a work of moral instruction and entertainment, and may be read with great advantage by young persons who would be aware of the ways of the world, and the snares that are laid to ruin innocence: in many respects the Adventurer is superior to the Spectator, and the author seems to have written with an excellent intention; but he has too frequently indulged that idle humour of laying his scenes upon Turkish ground, and conveying his precepts in Turkish attire.

The lives of men famous in their generation, as saints, martyrs, scholars, philosophers, soldiers; and of those who were singularly infamous, as impostors, thieves, murderers, tyrants, usurpers, &c. if faithfully represented, will instruct while they entertain, and exhibit good and evil, in their true colours, to much better effect than the thin-spun, long-winded letters of Richardson, the incoherent ramblings of Sterne, or the low scenes of Smollett, &c. which leave behind them but little worth retaining.

VI.

ON THE USE OF MATHEMATICAL LEARNING.

A YOUNG member of the university of Oxford, being directed by his tutor to the study of Euclid's Elements with the rest of his class, remonstrated against it to his companions as a useless undertaking: "What," said he, "does the man think my father intends me for a carpenter?" Many other

scholars of more wit than experience are under the same mistake: they think the mathematical sciences are of no benefit, but to those who are to make either a practical or a professional use of them. It must be owned, that their application to the business of life is chiefly in mechanics, astronomy, navigation, perspective, the military arts of fortifying and attacking of places, surveying of land, and the like. And where would be the harm, if a gentleman of fortune, who has leisure to know every thing, should know some of these things? But the use of mathematical learning is by no means confined to practical arts and necessary computations: it is eminently serviceable to improve and strengthen the intellectual faculties, and render them more fit for every kind of speculation. Geometry is a sort of logic, wherein quantities are the objects of argumentation: and the method of arguing is so strict, that the order of a demonstration cannot be followed without that unremitting attention, which, when it once becomes habitual to the mind, will be transferred to all other subjects; the memory will be better able on every occasion to assist the judgment in comparing what went before with what comes after, and thence deducing a conclusion with precision. Logic teaches the art of deducing some third proposition from the comparison of two others, in a syllogism: but a geometrical demonstration being frequently a series of such syllogisms, habituates the understanding to a more orderly arrangement of complicated ideas; for if the order is broken, the proof is deficient. Method is of the first importance in all subjects, to give a discourse the two excellences of force and perspicuity; and

no practice is so proper to communicate this art of methodizing as the forms of reasoning in geometry. We have a remarkable instance of the efficacy of this practice in the theological writings of Dr. Barrow, to whose skill in geometry it may be imputed, in great measure, that he has divided and disposed his subjects with so much art and judgment, as to exhaust their matter, and render them intelligible in every part.

But even to omit this analogical use of geometry, the science is necessary in itself to give an understanding of many things, which ought to be known by men of a liberal education. Geography can be understood but very imperfectly without it: and the arts of projection, which teach us how to represent the face of the world in perspective, are as entertaining as they are useful. Every curious mind must be delighted with the operations of trigonometry, which enables us to measure with certainty such quantities and distances as are inaccessible; which to an ignorant person seems impossible, as if there were some magic in the work: but it is the general object of all mathematical reasoning, from known quantities to find others that are unknown, by means of certain relations subsisting between them.

There is scarcely any thing in nature more wonderful to a contemplative person, and more worthy to be studied, than the effect of certain proportions in the theory of music, which can never be examined and understood without some knowledge of the doctrine concerning the composition and resolution of ratios, a curious and useful branch of the mathematics. Pythagoras was so captivated with

the mathematical sections of a musical string, and their practical application to some other arts, that he is reported to have exhorted his disciples, as he lay upon his death-bed, to study the monochord: and all this, as a matter of contemplation; for the improvement and enlargement of the mind is worth the attention of a scholar, though he never intends to strike a note of music all the days of his life. How ignorant, and even barbarous, would it be in a gentleman of education to remonstrate, that all this is nothing to him, because his father did not intend him for a fiddler!

In philosophy, especially under the present state of it, the use of mathematical learning is unquestionable. What gentleman of taste would not envy sir George Shuckburgh for his late learned labours upon the Alps, where he had the opportunity of trying so many curious experiments, by an application of the present theory of that useful instrument, the barometer, as improved by Mr. De Luc? But no gentleman can be qualified to amuse himself and serve the public in that way, without some considerable skill in calculation, the experiments being very intricate, and abounding with niceties which must be accurately understood and attended to.

A course of the most ingeniously contrived experiments on the velocity of projectiles, and the resistance of the air to bodies moving swiftly in it, were invented by the late Mr. Robins the engineer, which for their elegance are by no means beneath the admiration of a scholar, who will never repent of the labour necessary for understanding them. They have been farther carried on very lately from small arms to ordnance by Dr. Hutton, a member of

the Royal Society. Whatever the value of these experiments may be in themselves (and they are chiefly valuable to military artists) they have had at least one good effect, in which all men of literature have an interest; they have given occasion to a discourse from the late worthy president, sir John Pringle, which, for its learning, curiosity, elegance of style, and propriety of oratory, must be admired by all judges as a pattern in that kind of writing.

Now I have carried you thus far into the uses of mathematical learning, let me warn you against the danger we are under from the abuses of it. Mankind are very ingenious in using things, and they are almost as ingenious in abusing them. That great and good man, bishop Berkley, brought a heavy charge against the mathematicians of his age: first, because they deviated wantonly, and with some perplexity and apparent contradiction, into a boundless field of useless subtilties; and secondly, because many of them were found to be ill-affected to the greatest subjects of religion, which are infinitely more important in human life. It has been said, that he carried the matter too far, and laid himself open to the criticisms of his adversaries: but he had too much learning and too much acuteness to make himself ridiculous in the management of any argument. There was some foundation of truth in what he advanced: for if the mind is not upon its guard, a mathematician is disposed to look for that sort of sensible demonstration in other subjects, which is to be found only when we reason about quantities; and therefore he rejects much truth with a high hand, as if it were deficient in point of evidence; which is unreasonable and absurd. I

am as perfectly convinced, that there was such a man as Julius Cæsar, and that he was murdered in the capitol at Rome, as I am that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right ones: but I am not convinced upon the same kind of evidence; I cannot prove it by lines and angles. What then? I can no more doubt of the one than of the other: but I believe the one on visible descriptive evidence, depending upon certain axioms, or undeniable truths relating to quantities: and I believe the other on undeniable testimony, and the coins subsisting every where at this day, which bear his image and superscription; as also by his writings, which no man living was able to forge. I must therefore believe that there really was such a person, or I could soon show you, that I must believe something more incredible; and that would be just as irrational as to deny a geometrical proposition with its own proper evidence.

The ingenious Mr. Robins above mentioned, who, as a mathematician, a dexterous experimentalist, and a writer of a clear and classical style, was equal to most men living, was so unaccountably wild in his reasonings on some other subjects, that I have been told, he held the doctrine of future punishment to be a fable, because he could not see a *soul burned at Charing-cross:* as if the Scripture could not be true, because it is not a book of geometry; or there could be no future state, because we cannot prove it by an air-pump. De Moivre, another eminent mathematician, who left France as a protestant refugee, is said to have derided himself afterwards for leaving his country to preserve his religion, which he lost past recovery when he

had been some time in England. I had occasion once to inquire after a great proficient in mathematical learning, whose works I had seen while I had no knowledge of his person. My bookseller at London, of whom I inquired, gave me a particular account of him; adding to the rest, that he was a true mathematician, for he was a great reprobate, and every word he spoke was attended with an oath. I mention this, to show, that a notion had gone abroad, whether justly or not, that the generality of mathematicians are disposed, as such, to irreligion and profaneness. Two reasons may be given for this, supposing it to be true. The mathematics are open to students who have not had the advantages of a liberal education, and want the assistance of collateral learning to open their minds, and keep them within the bounds of truth and modesty: and as the fashion of the last and present age, with the fame so justly attributed to our great Newton, have placed the mathematical sciences so much higher than they used to be in the scale of literature, students who excel in them are under a temptation, incident to us all, to over-rate themselves and their knowledge. Thus they fall into vanity, pedantry, narrow-mindedness, and scepticism; neglecting, and even despising all other learning, which is equally, and, in some respects, more valuable, for improving the heart and rectifying the judgment: ignorant of things with which they are most intimately concerned; and placing all their pride in a sort of learning, to the exercise of which, perhaps, they will never be called, when they come forth into the business of life.

One thing I would whisper in the ear of scepti-

cism before I quit the present subject, which is this; that the more a man knows, the farther he sees into truth: as he sees farther into truth, the objects of his belief will be continually increasing; and, therefore, *doubting*, as such, is not a sign of wisdom: as he advances in knowledge, he will find by experience that he doubted from ignorance.

VII.

ON READING AND PRONUNCIATION.

You are sensible we have taken some pains, and with good reason, in the practice of reading with propriety. It is a matter of the last importance in education, though too generally neglected: in public schools it is seldom thought of. Several years are spent in charging the memory with words, while few days are employed in forming the voice and judgment to utter them in a powerful and agreeable manner.

A scholar may be such in theory, when his head is stored with languages, and he can interpret the writings of the Greeks and Romans; but he is no scholar in practice, till he can express his own sentiments in a good style, and speak them in a proper manner. A mathematician understands the rationale of musical sounds; but the musician, who charms the ear, and touches the passions, is he who can combine sounds agreeably, according to the rules of art in composition, and perform them well upon an instrument. The dead philosophy of music

in the head of a mathematician is like the learning of a Greek and Latin scholar, who can neither write nor read; and there are many such to be found.

There are two great faults in reading which people fall into naturally; and there is another fault which is the work of art, as bad, in my opinion, as either of the former: it is common with those who are untaught, or ill taught, or have a bad ear, to read in a lifeless insipid tone, without any of those artificial turnings of the voice which give force and grace to what is delivered. When a boy takes a book into his hand, he quits his natural speech, and either falls into a whining canting tone, or assumes a stiff and formal manner, which has neither life nor meaning. Observe the same boy when he is at play with his companions, disputing, reasoning, accusing, or applauding, and you will hear him utter all his words with the flexures which are proper to the occasion, as nature and passion, and the matter dictates. Why does he not read as forcibly as he speaks? This he would soon do, if he were to consider, that reading is but another sort of talking. He that reads, talks out of a book; and he that talks, reads without book; this is all the difference: therefore let a boy consider with himself, how he would talk what he is reading, and then he will drop the formal tone he had assumed, and pronounce easily and naturally.

The sense of a passage depends so much on the emphasis with which it is uttered, that if you read without emphasis, the matter is dead and unaffecting: if you lay it on the wrong word, you alter the sense. Trite examples have been given of sen-

tences which have as many meanings as words when the emphasis is differently placed. Thus, if the question were asked, *Do you ride to London to-day?* Place the accent on the first word, the sense is, *Do you; or do you not?* If you place it on the second, it means, *Do you go yourself; or does somebody else go for you?* Lay it on the third, it means, *Do you go on horseback, or on foot*, &c.? On the fourth, it asks, whether you go *so far as London, or only part of the way?* On the fifth, it is, do you ride *to London, or to some other place?* If you lay it on the two last, it asks, whether you go there *to-day, or at some other time?*

This example is sufficient to show, that you must understand the meaning of a sentence before you can pronounce it right; and that if you pronounce it wrong, the meaning cannot be understood by another person. To hear any one reading in a single unvaried note or monotone, without expressing the sense, is like looking upon a right line which has no variety of flexure to entertain the eye; and if he reads with a false emphasis, he makes the sense absurd and ridiculous. Many instances have been reported to illustrate this absurdity. They tell us of a reader, who in delivering that passage of Scripture from the reading desk, "He said unto them, saddle the ass, and they saddled him," unfortunately laid the accent on the last word; by which the sentence was made to signify, that the man was saddled instead of his beast.

The want of art and skill, especially in a matter where it is of real consequence, is unpardonable in a person of a liberal education: but it is equally offensive to read with too much art. *Nequid nimis,*

is to be observed here as in other cases. Affectation is disgusting wherever it is to be found; it betrays a want of judgment in the speaker, and none ever admire it but the illiterate, who are not prepared to make proper distinctions. We are never more justly offended, than when an attempt is made to surprise us with unreasonable rant, with grimace and distortion, and such other emotions as are not justified by the matter delivered, and destroy the effect of it with those who have judgment to see through the artifice. When a speaker seems to expect that I should be surprised, and I am not; when he shows me, that he is endeavouring to lead my passions where they cannot follow, it occasions a very disagreeable sensation. Affectation, though it is always out of place, and seldom fails to defeat its own intentions, is never more so than when it appears in the pulpit or the reading desk; where it is shocking to see the airs of the theatre, and to hear a preacher enforcing his observations with the voice of an actress expiring upon the stage.

What is unnatural cannot be just; and nothing can be affecting which is not natural. Therefore, in all reading, we must have regard to the sense, to the matter, and the occasion: then we shall read with propriety, and what we deliver will have the proper effect.

One rule ought never to be forgotten; that the reader or speaker should seem to feel in himself what he delivers to others; *si vis me flere, dolendum est ipsi tibi.* The principle is certain, and even mechanical; for in all machines, no part moves another, without being first moved itself. This is the soul of all elocution, with which a common

beggar at a door has the powers of an orator, and without which, all the rules of art are cold and insignificant. A barrel-organ can be made to play a most elaborate piece of music truly and correctly; but the sounds want that animation which they receive from the finger of a living player, who is himself delighted with what he is performing.

For practice in reading, a plain narrative has not variety enough to exercise the different turns of the voice: speeches, reasonings, controversies, and dialogues are more proper; and there is great choice in the Scriptures. The speeches of St. Paul to Agrippa, Festus, and the Jews; his reasonings in the epistle to the Romans; the conversation of the Jews with the man that was born blind—are all excellent to teach propriety and force of expression. Some of the Night Thoughts of Dr. Young are so difficult, that they cannot be expressed without some study and a perfect understanding of the sense; but when understood, they will contribute much to farther improvement. I am cautious of recommending speeches in plays; not only because the matter is too often corrupting, but because there is danger of falling from thence into an affected over-strained manner, which is always to be avoided.

The prose pieces of Swift are so correct and humorous, and are stored with such variety of speech, reasoning, and dialogue, that they cannot be read without advantage; and therefore I would recommend them to your perusal for this purpose. In a future letter I shall give you some advice about style and composition.