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## Documents Online

**Title:** Address after a “Short Vacation” by Charles Nisbet

**Date:** November 2, 1789

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Carlisle, Nov. 2d 1789.

Gentlemen,

If you have made a proper use of the short vacation that you have been allowed, you will be better qualified to reassume your Studies. The acquisition &

digestion of ideas is the principle Business of youth, & habits of activity & perspicacity acquired at that season of life, are what principally distinguishes one man from another in riper age. The Love of excellence & distinction, & a desire of being useful to mankind, are the great motives that ought to animate you in your studies. Without some strong affection, & the pursuit of some object which is considered as great & respectable, the human mind cannot be excited to that Degree of activity of which it is capable.

Passive habits & capacities, while they lie dormant in the mind, are of no use to the owner, nor to mankind; nay, their existence is extremely doubtful, when they are not excited by action & exercise; & when Parents tell us, as they often do, that their children have good understandings & capacities, we think it our duty to examine how far, & on what objects their understandings have been exercised, in order to satisfy ourselves whether the account they give of them is genuine, or only dictated by prejudice & partiality.

A mind that has been most exercised on objects that are worthy of it, & to its capacities, is the most learned, cultivated & accomplished of all others. It is possible indeed that the industry of youth may be misdirected & abused by being applied to objects of no moment, or such as are unsuitable to it; & when this is the case, it is the fault of the Teachers, & proceeds from their want of taste & judgment of what is most proper for youth. But when the activity of youth is excited in any considerable Degree, their taste will commonly be formed in the same proportion: & comparing a number of objects with each other, they will learn to distinguish what is great from that which is mean, that which is useful from that which is impertinent, & to discern the grand & sublime of nature.

But nothing can be more hurtful to youth than a too early propensity to judge & decide on the comparative value & usefulness of different studies & objects before they have acquired a capacity of judging of them, or had the least opportunity of being acquainted with them. A Presumption of this kind is not only disgusting to the learned, & ridiculous in youth, but highly pernicious to their success in study, & leads often to indolence & contempt of learning.

The student who refuses to apply to his Books till he is satisfied how far he is able to succeed, & how much he will gain by study, displays not only little judgment, but little inclination to learning, & instead of being likely to make great progress in it. Seems only to be seeking a plausible excuse for neglecting it, & abandoning it altogether.

We are sensible that the ignorance & fondness of Parents, & the conversation of ignorant men, who are commonly assuming & presumptuous in proportion to their ignorance, is the most common Cause of this foolish & forward disposition in youth, which leads them to judge of the value of things before they know them. At the same time we wish that they would use their own understandings, & not give credit to persons who are incapable of instructing them, in opposition

to their Teachers who are qualified for that purpose by painful study, & acquaintance with things.

We would only ask young Men whether they would not think it absurd & ridiculous in the highest degree, if they should refuse to learn any mechanical art or trade until that they were satisfied that they should be eminent in it, & assured how many Pounds, shillings & pence they should acquire by applying themselves to it; & no tradesmen could possibly give them such assurance, nor would be fond of receiving an apprentice, who was impertinent enough to expect to know the end of a thing before the beginning of it.

Now it is no less unreasonable for students who presume to judge beforehand of the usefulness & necessity of those branches of study that are prescribed to them, especially when they do this on the information of those who know as little of the matter as themselves, which is commonly the case, & to insist on being informed what they should gain by their application to study. No mortal can give them assurance on this head, & they must either try what the application of their natural powers can do for them, as innumerable others have done before them, or they must give over study altogether; because their Teachers are not conjurers, & will not pretend to predict with certainty how much they may be benefited by it.

The human Mind is made to be actuated by hope & fear which

are the great motives of human Actions; but if the objects of these were reduced to Certainty, & not attended with a degree of obscurity, they would cease to be proper motives of action, & human industry would be checked altogether, & our active powers would languish for want of proper incitement.

The mind of man is so made that it can never exert its powers with vigor, unless when it has at the same time some probable hope of success, & reasonable fears of miscarriage & disappointment, & when it considers application as necessary to success, & indolence & negligence as connected with misery & loss. Such is the situation of the mind in all the pursuits of human life, & in no other situation can it be active with reason & success.

Now if instead of this, our success in any pursuit were reduced to an absolute certainty before we began it, it would be absurd to expect activity & application; the powers of the Mind would languish, & we would look for success from the nature of things without us, instead of depending on industry, & the use of our own powers.

It is evident however that youth in some cases are guilty of acting in this ridiculous manner, when they expect success in learning merely from the labour of their Teachers, without contributing any thing to it themselves, especially when their natural indolence is encouraged by impertinent & ignorant advisers, who pretend to prescribe in a matter with which they are utterly unacquainted, & then unjustly blame the Teachers, because they cannot make youth learn any thing against their will, & without their concurrence & application. But as the change produced by instruction is in the mind of the Learner, it is evident that if he is not excited to use his own powers, & to act for himself, in concurrence with the Teacher, & in obedience to his directions, no change or improvement in the mind of the student can possibly be expected, & he must leave the Seminary as ignorant as when he came to it, while the Teachers are unjustly blamed for not having done what the indolence & remissness of their Pupils rendered utterly impossible.

Willingness & resolution to learn are therefore absolutely necessary on the part of the student, as well as capacity & diligence on the part of the Teacher; &

he is not to be blamed for the neglect of the other; for without both these knowledge cannot increase, or be communicated. There must be readiness & attention on the part of the student, as well as diligence & ability on the part of the Master, as that is not communicated which is not actually given by the one, & actually received by the other.

To afford the youthful mind an opportunity of exercising its natural powers, & to hold out proper & interesting objects to it, in order to excite these, is all that any Teacher, however able & accomplished, can undertake to perform; he can only give his Pupils an opportunity of learning, if they are diligent & willing, but it is impossible that young men should be taught in their sleep, or without their own knowledge, concurrence & application. Now when the mind of the Learner is indolent & inattentive, it is asleep to all the purposes of improvement, & can receive no more benefit in the one case than in the other, whatever be the ability or diligence of the Teacher. Instruction is wasted & scattered in vain, like seed in uncultivated soil, which rots on the surface, instead of vegetating or producing increase, not from any defect in itself, but from the unaptness & indisposition of the soil to receive it.

In order to excite you to willingness & application, we have often put you in mind that the number of those students that are unsuccessful for want of application is far greater than that of those who fail for want of genius or capacity. Of those who imbibe the first elements of a liberal education, few, if any, are born Blockheads, or absolutely incapable of being polished by Learning, though all are not capable of improvement in the same degree. But although Nature has made every thing unequal, so that there are not probably two particles of matter exactly equal to each other; yet as Nature has made nothing in vain, & as every particle of Matter has its proper place & use in the order of the Universe, so every rational mind has its determined capacity of improvement, by which it may reach its proper end, & fill its own place; & to lead it to that degree of improvement & excellence of which it is capable, is the great object of education & instruction.

Although therefore it is utterly impossible that all men should be

benefited by education in the same degree, yet by proper application all may be benefited by it, according to that degree of capacity which Nature at their foundation has endowed them with: And this ought to content us; for altho' the shortness & imperfection of human life does not admit of the excitement of all the talents & powers of which every man is susceptible, yet the wants of human society require the excitement of as many of them as can be excited during the short period that is allotted to our present existence.

It is certainly reproachful, as well as prejudicial to man to have it in his power to know many useful things which he never comes to know, & to have done much good to himself & others, which he has never done. The bounty of our Creator ought to be used with diligence, & received with thankfulness, & this in respect of knowledge as well as enjoyment. The beauties of external Nature would be lost upon us, & would be as though they had never been, if we should obstinately refuse to open our eyes to discern them; & that wonderful adjustment of things for supplying the wants, & promoting the happiness of all Creatures would be of no use to them, if they did not avail themselves of their active powers, in order to enjoy it, & to apply it to their benefit. Thus barbarous Nations possess the powers of Reason & understanding, which are notwithstanding in a great measure useless to them for want of cultivation, & their Country

contains various funds of wealth & enjoyment, which remain useless & unknown to them for want of industry & the useful arts.

The almighty & infinitely wise Author of our Being has been pleased to place the advantages of the Moral World no less within our reach than that of the natural, & they are attained precisely in the same manner, namely, by industry & the application of the active powers of our mind, which were given us for exercise, & which must remain totally useless without it.

The Knowledge of God & ourselves, of our Duty & interest, of what

is good or evil for us, what is honourable or disgraceful, what tends to our own happiness or misery here & hereafter, is only to be attained by the excitement & application of the powers of our mind, & is utterly unattainable by the indolent & ignorant. All men are born Barbarians with mere passive capacities of receiving knowledge, but endowed with no knowledge at their first formation; & as their bodies attain their destined measure of growth & strength by little, & by the use of natural means, & the exercise of their natural powers, so their minds must attain their growth in a similar manner, & by the use of means adapted to their nature: And as Death is the consequence of the neglect of those natural & proper means that are necessary for the preservation of bodily Life; so ignorance, barbarity, vice, disorder & misery of every kind, are the necessary consequences of the neglect of those means that tend to the cultivation & improvement of the mind, as it is but too evident from the experience of all Societies in proportion as these means are neglected or imperfectly used.

But as our present state is evidently imperfect & miserable, & as our powers of supplying our wants labour under manifold imperfections, God has been pleased to give us a Revelation of his Will for our salvation, which it is our highest wisdom to receive & obey. This Revelation is no less suitable to the nature of our Creator, than it is necessary for us, & adapted to our capacities & occasions. It teaches us what it is most necessary for us to know, & sets before us the great ends of our existence in such a manner, & with such evidence that we are inexcusable if we do not comply with its dictates, & strive to attain the highest happiness & perfection of our Nature, which it holds forth to us as the object of our hopes & endeavours.

Every thing in the visible world suggests the idea of Order, Wisdom, design, power & benevolence. The universe appears to be the work of an infinitely perfect Being, who has created every thing in number, weight & measure; who has adjusted all things exactly to each other; & in the formation of an infinite number of sentient & percipient Beings, has at the same time endowed them with capacities suited to their several Natures, & richly provided for their happiness, & the supply of their wants. The order of the universe whereby every thing

in its place contributes to the perfection & beauty of the whole, is evidently established by its great author, as none except a Being of infinite power, wisdom & goodness could have established it; & as this order is established by the Maker of all things, it is likewise supported by him, & it must be the interest of all the percipient & conscious in the Universe to conform themselves strictly & uniformly to this order in which alone they can attain all that happiness of which their nature is susceptible.

Now this order may be violated in two different ways, which however are nearly allied to each other, namely, either by indolence & voluntary ignorance, which buries the powers of our rational nature, & ruins them by disuse & neglect, or by Vice which is the perversion of our

natural powers, & exercises them in opposition to the Laws & order which God has established in the universe, & consequently exercises them in vain, or to our destruction, instead of our happiness; but both these transgressions have the same issue, namely, the Misery of the Creature, ignorance & indolence necessarily producing the pain of Loss, or the want of that happiness which we might have attained, & vice producing the pain of Sense, or the experience & endurance of that misery which we might have avoided.

On the other hand, Knowledge & Virtue, which are to be attained by the proper use & application of the powers of our minds, naturally lead us to that happiness of which our Nature is capable. Knowledge teaches us what we are, & what we are capable of being & doing, & virtue not only teaches us what we ought to be & do, but in what manner we may attain to the highest happiness of which our Nature is capable, namely, by conforming ourselves to the order & laws of the universe, & never expecting happiness where it is not to be attained, nor neglecting those means by which alone we can be put in possession of it.

In the order which God has established in the world the most valuable ends are necessarily connected with certain means, & these ends

are attained gradually, & by means of constant & persevering application. Nothing that is truly great & desirable is easy to be acquired, nor can be acquired in a little time, nor by faint & feeble exertions. A degree of labor & industry suitable to the value of every object, must necessarily be employed in order to attain it, & to think of attaining it in any other way, is the utmost folly, being no less than an attempt to alter the nature & order of things, which God has established.

Now although the several means which are necessarily employed for the attainment of knowledge & virtue, when considered by themselves, may appear useless & impertinent to superficial understandings, & such as may be dispensed with in a great measure, this error of theirs proceeds only from their ignorance of Nature, which accomplishes the greatest & most important ends by slow degrees, & by such means as appear at first to be impertinent & contemptible, but which when used in their due order, with proper diligence & perseverance, produce the effect, according to the order of Nature, which has determined that it shall be produced in that way, & no otherwise. Nay, even in the works of art, which is the handmaid & imitator of Nature, the same slowness of progress, the same necessary connexion between ends & means is uniformly to be observed, & all attempts to alter this order are utterly vain & absurd. What can appear more absurd, for instance, at first sight than the operation of Agriculture, which is the mother, as well as the Nurse & supporter of all other Arts? To the superficial mind, it seems to be the greatest folly to plough the surface of the earth with painful industry & perseverance, & to take that grain which is the support of our Life, & bury it in the furrows, & to wait till the influence of Heaven in the revolution of the Seasons have given it a new body with manifold increase, according to the Laws of Vegetation; yet it is in this way alone, that food is to be produced from the earth, & all attempts to obtain it in any other manner would be equally irrational & ineffectual.

Now a lively idiot of a projecting genius might probably ask why is all this waste & profusion of Labor, & this tedious expectation of the revolution of the Seasons; & might observe with a great deal of gravity & self-importance, that the matter might be much more easily & speedily accomplished; that the same degree of heat which is produced by the tedious & repeated action of

the Sun might be produced all at once by means of a furnace heated to the same degree by the help of a Thermometer; & that grain may be raised in a few days by a chemical process, & the application of artificial heat & moisture much more effectually, as well as more quickly, than by the tedious operations of the Sun & the rain, according to the ordinances of Heaven. And while he considered only his own ideas without attending to the laws of Nature, he might probably think himself an ingenious man, & that all Farmers were errant fools who are ignorant of the powers of Art, & take a great deal of pains to no purpose.

But as the sober & experienced Husbandman would laugh at the folly of this Chymical farmer, & trust rather to the plough, & the chymistry of Nature for a good crop, than to the operations of the furnace or the alembic; so those who are acquainted with the nature of the human Mind will expect to communicate knowledge, & to lead the minds of youth to knowledge & virtue by slow degrees, & in the use of those means which have been found to be actually successful, rather than to think of accomplishing the work of many years in a few days or hours, as some Chymical projectors in education are ready to propose, in order to avoid the labour of study, & the tediousness of application & meditation.

When the Statuary first extracts a block of marble from the quarry, it is nothing like what it will be afterwards, or what he proposes to make it; but having designed & projected in his mind the form which he intends to bestow on it, he proceeds in order, & brings it gradually to that form by innumerable applications & strokes of his chisel, each of which considered by themselves would appear impertinent & useless to a superficial observer, though all of them are gradual approaches to its destined form & beauty. And by skill & perseverance he attains his end at last, so that what at first was only a lump of shapeless matter, now seems to glow with life, & expresses the passions & qualities of mind, the invincible strength of Farnesian Hercules, the majesty of the Olympian Jupiter, or the enchanting beauty of the Medicean Venus, & all this only by removing slowly certain particles of matter from their former

place & position.

Now as the painful & tedious labors of the Husbandman & the Statuary are apt to be impertinently criticised by the Sons of ignorance & project, so the labors of intelligent instructors of youth are often no less ignorantly & impertinently blamed by foolish & impertinent Projectors in education who would attempt impossibilities, & endeavour to precipitate the operations of nature. Such would be apt to tell us that if we mean to communicate knowledge & virtue to our Pupils, why do we teach them Latin & Greek, & talk to them of Socrates, Plato, Epaminondas, Plutarch & Seneca, & such outlandish folks, whom most of their Neighbours know nothing of, though they have good estates, & may be chosen members of Congress, Convention & Assembly by the free election of their Peers? To these we can only say that we follow Nature, & proceed by such steps as she has pointed out, & made practicable; & that in order to make them Scholars, we set bright examples before them, & teach them what other men have been, & have done, in order to excite them to do the like, or, if possible, to excel them, instead of persuading them that they can know every thing that is useful for themselves without labour & study, which nature has made impossible. Now to complain of the labor of learning Latin & Greek, is as foolish & impertinent as to complain of the course of the Seasons, & the extremes of cold & heat, as it amounts to a censure of Providence for permitting the existence of these Languages, & for

having made them the languages of the most wise & magnanimous Nations of the Universe. Now if we would rival, or resemble these people, i.e. if we would be wise & magnanimous, we must learn what they have said, & left on record for our instruction & example, which cannot be done without learning their Languages, as, although they were alive, we could not prevail on them to talk to us in English. So that we must either despise & neglect the works of these men who are the most eminent of mankind, & conclude that we can discover Nature without their assistance, which would be the extreme of ignorance & presumption, or we must be content to take the trouble of learning their Languages, in order

to be able to converse with them, & share the benefit of their discoveries & experience. But to this our Projectors will reply that the most distinguished works of the Ancients have been translated, & that we may acquire all their ideas & experience by these translations. Now to this we may answer, that no Translation can be so faithful & happy as to convey all the force, beauty & propriety of the original; & of this none are so sensible as translators themselves who complain in their prefaces that the idiom of our Language could not express fully the sense of the Greek or Latin Authors; accordingly we find that there is something so stiff, unnatural & insipid in all translations that they are rarely or never read with pleasure, & never attract the attachment of their readers. They resemble their originals only as a skeleton resembles a man; & though it has the great lines of the human form & proportion, yet can never give us any distinct or adequate idea of life, beauty & motion. Accordingly the world has never seen any person become attached to Grecian & Roman literature, or tolerably acquainted with the history & character of these nations merely by reading Pope's Homer, Littlebury's Herodotus, Dryden's Virgil, Digby's Quintus Curtius, Bladen's Casar, Clarke's Suetonius, L'Estrange's Seneca, or the works of Ovid & Plutarch done into English by several hands. No such Greek & Latin scholar has ever appeared, or can appear in the world, as the beauty of the thoughts of the Classics must necessarily be obscure to those who do not understand the original Languages: So that we find that a very superficial knowledge contents the readers of translations, & their curiosity being disappointed or imperfectly gratified soon leads them to throw by their books in disgust; whereas those who can understand & relish original authors are never weary of perusing them, & daily discover new beauties in them, which could not be communicated by a translation. Now to this again our Adversaries, as they are impudent & talkative, will reply, that

Nature is open to us as well as to the Ancients; & why may we not understand & describe it as well as they have done? But to this we answer, that experience testifies the contrary, as no modern has as yet been able to rival the compositions of the ancients, nor even to imitate them with tolerable success without profiting by their example. All the scenes of Nature were open to the authors of the tenth Century, as much as to those of the eighteenth, though the compositions of the first are rude, tasteless & barbarous, & those of the other elegant, correct & beautiful. Now to what are we to attribute this striking difference in the works of men who had Nature equally before them, except that in the tenth Century the Classics were little understood or studied, & in the eighteenth, they are known & studied by every Scholar, & considered as the models of polite & regular composition. And it would be irrational to assign any other cause of this difference, as the mere natural parts & capacities of Men are generally as strong in any one age as in any other, & nature from which they copy, is always the same.

Now if this should be denied, & if it should be thought that there are remarkable differences in the original capacities of men, who, that is acquainted with both, can deny that the advantage in this respect lies on the side of the ancients, who copied from naked nature such scenes as we are still unable to rival, even with their help, & all the aid that is derived from posterior discoveries, of which they were necessarily ignorant. Nature appears to have been frugal of distinguished abilities, & to have dealt them only to such as were destined to be the general instructors of mankind, in order that others might have an opportunity of learning from them what they never could have discovered of themselves. And these who, through Pride or indolence, disdain the benefits of such able guides, deserve to remain in ignorance & misery, & to relapse into barbarity by neglecting the means of knowledge & civilisation.

Before the revival of Learning in Europe, which was brought about by means of the study of the Classics, that Country was only an Indi-

an forest, possessed by a multitude of ignorant & tyrannical Chiefs, who lived in barbarity & misery, & spent their whole time in endeavouring to destroy one another; but when the Latin & Greek languages came to be studied, Science & Taste revived, Morals & religion came to be understood, the arts of Policy & society began to be cultivated, & Europe became to be the instructor & mistress of the world.

Now if the Goths & Vandals of the present day, who despise the ancients, because they knew nothing of them, might have their will, this Country which in every respect is only in its infancy, instead of improving & rivaling modern Europe, must quickly relapse into that barbarity in which Europe was before the revival of Learning. For if the ancient Languages are discouraged & neglected, Taste, Morals & Religion must soon decay, ignorance, selfishness & barbarity will immediately take place, the habits of Society, & the Love of order will vanish in a little time, & Indian barbarity extinguish every appearance of order, government & regular Society.

But we are told by our foolish Projectors in Education that Knowledge & philosophy may flourish among us, though Greek & Latin languages be totally neglected; in order to gratify the indolence of youth, the study of philosophy & the fine arts must be neglected for the same reason. Besides, those who have not vigor of mind to overcome the difficulties of the study of the ancient languages, cannot have any capacity to succeed in the study of Philosophy, not to mention that the elements & principles, & the very language of philosophy can only be learned from the Latin & Greek authors; nor have any of those who neglected these Languages, ever arrived to any tolerable knowledge in philosophy. We ought to judge by experience, & not by the mere affirmation of brainless Projectors against all experience. We repeat it; none ever made any figure in the Sciences, who were ignorant of the learned Languages; & we read the works of such for curiosity, as we read the poems of the Negroe Phillis Wheatley, or the letters of Ignatius Sancho. For it is well known to all who know any thing of learning that all the attainments in Science that can be reached by men destitute of the knowledge of the learned Languages are either merely imaginary, or at most

of the middling sort. Some men indeed are a kind of Miracles of Nature, & overcome disadvantages that would be invincible to others. But it is mere madness & ignorance to propose these men as examples to others, or to imagine that that may be done by the generality which has

been hardly & imperfectly atchieved by a few priviledged Geniuses, who appear but once in a thousand years.

Things can only be known by their Names, & therefore Grammar, which is the Science of Names & affirmations, must necessarily precede every other part of science, & be indispensably necessary in order to their acquisition. In this flimsy, assuming & projecting age, we are sometimes told that Grammar & Criticism contain only the knowledge of words, & that the knowledge of Nature, men & things may be acquired without them; nay, some are so ignorant as to pretend that the study of the English Language may be cultivated with success without the knowledge of the ancient Languages. But these men do not consider that the English Language itself is compounded of Latin & Greek for the most part, especially in every thing that relates to Science, & the signification of every term that is employed in these must necessarily be derived from these languages. To talk of understanding English Books on Science, therefore, without the assistance of the ancient Languages is as irrational, as to think of understanding a whole without knowing any thing of those parts whereof it consists.

Now what is Philosophy but the knowledge of the nature, origin & properties of things which are distinguished by their Names, divided into certain Classes, & variously compared with each other; & in order to this we must first be acquainted with their Names by which they are distinguished from each other, & by which their Several properties are expressed. For it is ridiculous to talk of communicating knowledge to others without an intelligible Language, & names whereby their several Natures & properties may be known, & their difference or agreement with each other expressed & communicated so as to be intelligible to others. So that even the sense of seeing & hearing, or the talent of Reason & Knowledge are not more

necessary for enabling one to understand Lessons of Philosophy in English than a thorough knowledge of the Greek & Latin languages, which an Englishman, as well as others, must necessarily make use of in teaching Philosophy, as to teach it in English words is a task naturally impossible, & never attempted by any one.

Now to obviate this difficulty all that our Projectors have to propose is, to make use of English Dictionaries, & to learn the sense of the terms by use, which is a much more laborious, as well as a more ineffectual method than even the study of Languages.

When we exhort you therefore to the study of Grammar, & to the knowledge of the dead Languages, we call you to the study of the first part of Philosophy, which is necessary & indispensable in order to our understanding the others, as it treats of language without which we cannot even know the names of the other parts of Science, far less understand their nature & contents; & it seems to be a strange way of communicating Science to attempt to teach it without understanding one word that we say, or being able to make others understand it.

All attempts therefore to communicate Science without the knowledge of the Languages, are only so many endeavours to force nature, & to accomplish what it has rendered impossible, & resemble the labours of that philosopher whom Monsr. de la Bruyere speaks of who had studied a great number of years to devise a method of enlightening his Chamber without the help of the windows, & of going into it, & coming out of it, without making use of the door!!!

We are sometimes told that the present age is the maturity of the world, & that it is below the dignity of our enlightened times servilely to imitate the Ancients. Be it so; but what the Ancients have done well & wisely, we cannot be better advised than to borrow from them. They certainly invented eating & drinking, & used to sleep in the Night, or when they were weary; & it would

be no less ridiculous for us to avoid imitating them in these things than if we should endeavour to write with our feet, & walk on our hands, be-

cause the Ancients walked on their feet, & used their hands for writing & working.

To discover & to follow Nature, is a great & important rule both of life & study. Nature has determined the order of things, & the means that lead to the great end of our Being, & to endeavour to attain it in any other way is only afflicting ourselves, & losing our labor by endeavouring to do that which never either has been, or can be, done.

Philosophy discloses the nature & order of things with their several properties & relations to us, & to each other, & teacheth us to discover what is great & little, fit or unfit, good or evil, reasonable or unreasonable, what we ought to pursue, & what we ought to avoid, wherein our true Happiness consists, & what we ought to do & avoid, in order to attain it; & on these things it employs our powers of Perception & comparison.

Man is a sociable Creature, & his interest & happiness, as well as his duty are intimately connected with Society, & relate to others as well as to himself. To promote the good of Society therefore, & to seek our own happiness in connexion with that of others, & to do to others that which we would think it just & reasonable that they should do to us, is not only the end of civil & political knowledge, but of all philosophy & Morals in general.

That Selfish philosophy which teaches men to regard themselves only, to follow their vain inclinations & humours, & to think, believe & act as they please, without regard to the order of Nature, or the rights & interests of others, however vaunted by some shallow politicians, is really inconsistent with the welfare & order of Society, being that which at this moment is filling in the Kingdom of France with slaughter & pillage, & destroying property & the order of Society under pretence of securing the natural rights of mankind. The French, as well as ourselves, have been guilty of idolising & encouraging those writers, who flatter the irregular passions of men, & who persuade them that they have a right to pursue their own happiness in any way that they chuse, without regard to the interests of others; & the same maxims must have similar effects in all other Countries.

Now it is your present profession & business to study the nature of things, & to improve the faculties of your minds for the promoting your own happiness, & that of others, to learn to be obedient & diligent Students, in order to be useful & honorable members of Society, & to do honor to your Country, your Parents & your teachers, as well as to yourselves. To this therefore you ought chiefly to attend, & in this conclude that your honor consists, to be obedient & attentive to your teachers, & under their direction to explore what of Nature has been discovered by others, before you think yourselves capable of making new discoveries. Endeavour to comprehend what others have said & written, & never despise, or judge of any thing before you understand it. Be not affraid of labor. It is the natural state of man, & the endurance of it is necessarily annexed to the attainment of every thing that is valuable or desireable. Be frugal of your time, as of your blood, or of your money, & suffer no part of any of these, if possible, to run to waste. The season of youth is precious, & fit for labor & enterprise, & if that passes without improvement, it will be impossible for you to retrieve its loss in an after period.

It cannot be expected that you should comprehend the use & tendency of every exercise that is presented to you, or how you are to be benefited by every object that is presented to your

mind. The ultimate end of all our labors with regard to you can only be discovered, when they are at an end. In the mean time, you may assure yourselves that nothing shall be imposed on you, or prescribed to you, except what is necessary & useful, & for this you ought to rely on the capacity & experience.

But while we wage you to diligence in the pursuit of knowledge, we would not wish you to forget Religion & Morality, in the practice of which alone you can be happy. Remember that there is a God who has made you, & all things else, to whom all men are accountable for their conduct. Revere his Name; believe & obey his holy word, & respect his presence at all times; & consider yourselves & every thing else as necessarily dependent on him. Do not imagine that you were sent into this

World to gratify your own vicious & selfish inclinations, but to conform yourselves to the order of the Universe, & to promote your own happiness in consistence with that of others.

Truth, justice & benevolence are the great bonds of human society, as temperance & innocence are the means of attaining private happiness. Beware of indolence, impudence, cowardice, falsehood & meanness of Soul, which are the ruin of our nature, & which exclude all worth & virtue whatsoever. Let your word have the sacredness of an Oath, & reckon nothing so contemptible as lying & cheating, whether in small or in great matters. Revere truth & justice, & govern yourselves by the nature of things, & not according to the mean examples, that many set before you, on account of which this Country is execrated & despised in all parts of the Globe. There can be nothing great, worthy or estimable in the character of a man who falsifies his promise, or encroaches on the property of another, whatever excuses he may make for his conduct; & he is a poor rogue indeed who cannot make an excuse. You live in a base & corrupt age; beware of being infected by it, & of losing all shame by frequent repetition of falsehood & injustice. But we will say more; & in the words of the Apostle Paul, exhort you to walk as you have us for an example, as we uniformly despise falsehood, meanness, injustice & disorder of every kind; go you, & do likewise, & you may expect peace of mind, & be sure of deserving honor, whether you meet with it, or not. In fine; whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are lovely, & of good report, think on these things, & may God give you Understanding in all things.

Amen.