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Title: Address after a Vacation by Charles Nisbet

Date: June 19, 1788

Location: SC Vault Nisbet 37

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Carlisle, June 19th 1788.

Gentlemen,

The time of youth, in which we enlarge our ideas by study, is certainly the most pleasant part of life, if it is properly improved; but to this sundry conditions are requisite, which are often neglected by the greater part of youth, which we shall endeavour briefly to suggest to you, that you may prosecute your studies with as much pleasure & profit as possible.

The first & not the least important of these is an eager curiosity or active desire of knowledge. When the faculties are fresh & newly excited, this is apt to be felt in the highest degree, & if it is kept up & properly directed, the acquisition of knowledge become the gratification of a passion, & proceeds easily, & without painful sensations. Where it is wanting, or defective in vigor, the teacher labors in vain, & the pupil feels only the pain of acquiring knowledge, without any pleasure or advantage. Original dullness is perhaps incurable, but it is not so common as some imagine. The minds of the most part of youth, if excited by proper objects, will ordinarily admit of a tolerable degree of this desire, which will lead to a progress proportionally moderate,

though of great use to the possessor.

A sense of the dignity & usefulness of learning is likewise of the highest consequence to youth. A taste for the Grand, the Wonderful & Magnificent is a part of our Nature, & when this appears in youth, & is directed towards knowledge as its object, it often produces the most salutary effects. It is impossible that we should exert the least diligence in acquiring what we consider as useless, mean or of little importance in life. The ill success of many students may be traced to this source. Having heard from some ignorant or indolent boy, perhaps from one come of age, that learning is unnecessary or of little value, they never look farther than the entrance of it, which from this preconceived opinion appears harsh & discouraging, & though forced by the orders of their parents to make a show of studying, yet never apply to it in earnest. They acquire a few words or names without ideas, & retire disgusted & untaught. And it is no wonder that they should not have learned what they never admired, or conceived as an object worthy of their attention & application. It is rather wonderful that they learn any thing at all.

The love of distinction is the passion of great souls, & when a youth does not appear very susceptible of this, there is little hope of his succeeding in any kind of study. Though emulation, when accompanied with malevolence, is

justly reckoned a vice, yet few scholars have ever been formed without the help of this passion. As malevolence is not the natural vice of youth, there is in most cases little hazard in encouraging emulation in that age. To be preferred to others will flatter the ambition, & excite the diligence of youth, though they do not in the least hate or despise those to whom they are preferred. On the contrary, the more justice is done to their merit, the greater is the praise of having been able to excell them.

The various degrees of ability discernible in youth, & the early determinations to different branches of study, afford every one an opportunity & hope to excell, while the degrees of improvement to which many attain, who appeared at first to promise little, leaves none any

reason to despair. This gradation of natural & acquired endowments leaves all open to emulation, & gives none any right to despise another.

When it is considered that the most learned & able of mankind have no faculties that all men are not possessed of in some degree, it ought to encourage all to use those means that have proved so successful to others. None has a right to pronounce, without actual trial, that he is incapable of any kind of learning, nor even that he may not come to take pleasure in acquiring it.

The first exercises of our faculties are necessarily painful & imperfect. Time, exercise & experience render every thing more easy, & accomplish many things, which we at first despaired of attaining.

A youth needs only to look back to his childhood, & to remember what time & pains perhaps it cost him to learn to read, which he now does with ease & with a single glance, in order to be convinced, that other habits, & modes of exercising his faculties may in time become equally easy to him. An indolent despair of success, as well as an aversion to labor, may be reckoned among the most common & prevalent causes of the bad success of many students, whose parts are equal to those of the most successful.

Without annexing some considerable degree of dignity to the acquisition of Learning, it is not to be expected that youth will bestow any pains on it; far less that they will devote several of their best years in order to attain it. What proves ruinous to many, is a proneness to judge of the value of learning before it is possible for them to know what it is, or wherein it consists. Common sense requires that we should be well acquainted with those subjects on which we presume to pronounce any judgment, whether in the way of praise or blame: but with regard to this the impatience & credulity of youth is most

prone to transgress. The saying of a Blockhead, who perhaps knows much less than themselves, or the observation of the contempt cast by the ignorant on Men of Letters, has often more weight with them, than the reason of the thing, or the authority of their parents or teachers can possibly have. If youth were ordinarily cool enough for deliberation, they would be desirous to learn the nature & worth of learning from those who have acquired it, rather than suffer themselves to be determined by the foolish prejudices of those who know nothing of the matter. But coolness is rarely the gift of early years, though a certain degree of it may certainly be attained by them, even before experience.

In order to enable youth to pass the time of their education with pleasure as well as profit, it is necessary that they be on their guard against impatience of spirit, & immoderate expectations. When they are convinced of the dignity & usefulness of learning, & likewise that it is clearly attainable in the use of proper means, they ought to consider likewise that time, as well as application, is necessary for attaining any considerable degree of it. A resolution hastily formed, & diligently pursued for a little, is often found to flag through unexpected difficulties & discouragements. We ought to conceive

the pursuit of learning as attended with difficulties, as well as that of every other thing that is great & estimable, & to undertake it in expectation of meeting with these, as well as with

encouragement. To expect to succeed in a little time, or with a slight or temporary application, is almost as absurd as to imagine that we can succeed without any application at all.

Early prejudices in favor of particular branches of learning to the depreciation of others, is hurtful to youth, & often proves grievous to teachers. No part of science ought to be despised, nor any part so magnified as to neglect or despise others. Young as many are, who are sent to seminaries it often costs the Teacher a considerable time to get them to unlearn the foolish prejudices, which they have received, & the false opinions, which they have adopted from the conversation of the ignorant. Youth ought to consider that they are sent to seminaries to learn what they do not yet know, & to discover by the help of others, what is profitable for them, instead of presuming that they are already able to judge for themselves. Some parts of learning are undoubtedly more useful than others, to persons destined to certain professions, but an early choice of a particular profession, before we are acquainted with

our own capacities, is very injudicious, & cannot be attended with good consequences. To study every branch of science, as if it were to be our particular profession, is the indication of a judicious & active mind, as well as the only way to discover what we are best qualified for; whereas an avowed neglect of any part of science, on pretence that it is unnecessary in our intended profession, favors of indolence & petulance, instead of judgment.

The ill success that many have in certain professions to which they were too early destined, either by their own folly, or that of their parents, ought to deter youth from determining positively on this heads, till they have tried their faculties by a course of general education. It is surely time enough to resolve what profession we are to follow, when we have made trial of our faculties, & had some time to distinguish between a blind & ignorant impulse to any particular profession, & that determination which arises from genius or capacity.

A youth cannot be said to have conceived a just idea of the dignity of learning, who is capable of despising or willfully neglecting any part of it. To conceive of learning as only necessary to qualify

us for certain particular professions, is certainly betraying great ignorance of its worth. Suppose one were possessed of so ample a fortune that it were quite unnecessary for him to exercise any particular profession, yet learning would be highly valuable & necessary for him as a Man, a Citizen, or a member society. Persons of fortune & distinction, when destitute of learning & taste, must necessarily disgrace themselves by gross sensuality, or childish ignorance. Learning alone can confer dignity on rank & fortune, & enable the possessors of them to enjoy them with propriety, elegance & advantage. If one were born heir to a Crown, yet if his mind is unfurnished, & his faculties unexcited by learning, he must be an object of contempt, & incapable of conducting himself with propriety in his high station, or of enjoying his fortune with honor to himself, or emolument to the public. Learning is perfective of human nature in general, independent of the order of society, or of those professions which that has rendered necessary. To partake of human nature, therefore, is enough to render learning necessary to us. The ignorant barbarian differs but little from a Brute. Absorbed by

animal desires & enslaved to sensual appetites, his whole attention is confined to the means of supporting bodily life, & when his animal desires are gratified, he indolently falls asleep, being scarce conscious that he has a soul. Whereas learning multiplies the enjoyments, ennobles the faculties, & diversifies the occupations of men, & while it gratifies their appetite for excellence & rational pleasure, leaves them always an infinite number of objects of pursuit & expectation, without which the rational soul cannot be really happy.

The duties of a father, a master of a family, a free citizen, or a servant of the state, can be but ill discharged by persons of uncultivated minds. Incapable to combine or compare objects, they are generally actuated only by present, sensible & temporary views of things. To form a rational plan of operations, to discern effects in their causes to deduce probable consequences, to make reasonable allowances & proper distinctions, is equally out of their power. Hence they act on confined & imperfect views of things, mistake the interest of a few individuals for the interest of the public; blindly attached to their prejudices, & too violent to hearken to reason, they dishonour the human Character, mistake their own real interest, &

sometimes even with good intentions, prove plagues & scourges to all that have the misfortune of being connected with them, or within the reach of their violence.

The character of a free citizen was counted honorable in Ancient Rome, & consciousness of being members of a free Republic was supposed to give dignity to the conceptions & transactions of Romans, whose history, though it exhibits many examples of vice, is less stained with meanness than that of other nations. The high notions they had formed of the dignity of their society, seemed to inspire every citizen with a sense of honor, & consider their own behaviour as of importance to the glory of Rome. It were to be wished that all the Citizens of free Republics had the like rational & elevated sentiments. It is certain that when they have them not, they prove themselves unworthy of liberty, & fit to be restrained by the Iron rod of despotic government.

The formation of the laws, discerning the interests, supporting the order & electing the magistrates of a free society, necessarily require knowledge, experience & discernment. An ignorant citizen must be very ill qualified for discharging his duties with propriety. Equally incapable of judging properly for himself, & harkening to the advice of those

that are able to inform him, he votes at random, is easily imposed on by false pretences, & is constantly the tool & property of some noisy Demagogue. Inpatient of order, a foe to justice, & a tyrant so far as in his power, he indulges his appetite to rule, in opposition to the laws to which he himself has consented. If he is a Magistrate he abuses the powers & privileges of his office to gratify his own appetites, to flatter his vanity, to plague his private enemies, & to procure gain to himself & his friends without the least regard to the public. Equally insolent & unreasonable when he is in the majority & when he is in the minority, he would have every thing yield to him, & tramples with insolence & insensibility on the most sacred rights of mankind. Learning introduces us to grand and worthy objects, inspires us with a love of order, justice & religion, discloses the true nature & relations of men & things, & prescribes a conduct suitable to these, it serves to improve & adorn every rank & state of life. It adds dignity to the Great, decency & discretion to the mean, it directs the Magistrate, inspires the Legislator with public spirit, & unfolds to all men the necessity

of justice, benevolence, order & good government.

You ought therefore to be persuaded that your application to learning is highly necessary & useful to you, whatever rank of life you are destined to, & whatever profession you may be called to exercise. It will enlarge your faculties, increase your enjoyments, preserve you from vicious & low pursuits, & prepare you for adorning any station in life. To render your studies pleasing to you, you ought constantly to keep these things in view, as you cannot be satisfied with your situation, except you are conscious that you are engaged in a worthy pursuit, & employed in acquiring what will be of the utmost advantage to you in future life. Even now, while in the course of your studies you ought to show that you already know enough to restrain you from vice & meanness, to render you patient of discipline, labor & application, dutiful to your parents, obedient to your teachers, & just, benevolent & civil to one another. The benefits of learning ought to go hand in hand with the pursuit of it. As engaged in the pursuit of what is excellent, you ought to avoid indolence, rudeness, falsehood & meanness, to show yourselves observant of order by justice & good breeding to one another, & by

avoiding all offence, clamour, violence & quarreling. Your learning will not be sufficient to recommend you to esteem, or even to preserve you from contempt, if your Moral Conduct is not rational, orderly & peaceable. You will be supposed to have learned little indeed if you have not learned civility, decency & propriety of behaviour, which require less exertion, & smaller talents, than the acquisition of considerable degrees of learning, though no less useful in life, or honorable to the possessor.

An immoderate attention to trifles is apt to grow in youth, especially if they have been too much indulged in their childhood. This is such a source of sorrows, that unless it is removed, youth can neither be happy in themselves, nor pleased with each other. Youth ought, therefore, to learn early that it is mean to interest their affections in every thing, & that many things are below their attention. Trifling & meanness produce more quarrels & give greater pain to youth, than the warmth of their tempers, or the difficulty of their studies.

If you would pass the time of your studies with pleasure, you must acquire & preserve a good character.

A regard to reputation ought to be cherished early in life & constantly maintained. This is not only the indication of a great soul, but proves a most powerful mean of preserving youth from vice, idleness, & trifling. Next to a sense of religion & of the presence of the Deity, nothing can be more useful to youth than a regard to Character, & a habitual attention to preserve it. When love of reputation is extinguished in youth, there is no principle remaining, on which a teacher can work, to excite them to diligence in learning, or propriety of behaviour. The love of fame is nearly connected with the love of virtue, & when the one is lost, we can scarcely hope to retain the other. A youth as well as a man, who is lost to all sense of Reputation, is prepared for every crime, & has broke through one of the most necessary restraints of vicious passion.

Intemperance in talking is one of the ordinary vices of youth, & the cause of much misery to them. It is true that youth ought to be more talkative among themselves than those of mature age, yet excess in this kind cannot be checked too early, nor with too great care. A habit of

speaking without thought, or attention to what they are saying, both betrays meanness, & contributes to en-

courage a thoughtless temper. Even young boys ought to observe moderation in speech, & not to utter every trifle that presents itself to their sense or imagination. To distinguish between what is fit or unfit, worthy or unworthy of mention, are habits which ought to be cultivated with the greatest care in youth. Not to be ashamed of talking contemptibly or absurdly, is a degree of the same meanness & baseness of temper, as not to be ashamed of vicious conduct.

A sacred regard to truth cannot be too early inculcated on youth. The meanness of the vice of Lying, & the dignity & importance of truth ought frequently to be recalled to their memory. Intemperance & thoughtlessness in speech easily lead to a habit of lying, & a character of this kind acquired in youth will not be easily got over in mature age. Possibly the greatest part of those vices which disgrace men in society may be traced to bad habits contracted in early youth. The beginnings of vicious habits appear trifling, & of little consequence, but when not early checked become in time the causes of all those vices that infest & desolate society. The future thief, robber or murderer may be often discovered, & their fate & character predicted, from

the evil habits they indulge in their childhood. It is by little & little that men become qualified for great crimes, as well as for virtuous & noble actions. No body becomes very vicious all of a sudden, says an ancient poet.

If you wish that your studies may give you pleasure as well as profit, you ought to beware of indulging anger & resentment. These are degrading & disagreeable passions, equally fatal to the quiet & reputation of youth. An irritable & uneasy temper is generally formed by too great attention to trifles, & the want of a sense of dignity of character. Youth might be much profited if they would observe the disagreeable & degrading effects of immoderate & unreasonable anger in others. They may think their own provocation to be just, but they may often see that others are excited to anger by trifles which they ought to have reckoned unworthy of notice. The mean & foolish figure which one makes, under the influence of anger ought to prove a powerful restraint from indulging that disagreeable & tormenting passion.

Among the many evil effects of anger, it is not the least that it often proves its own punishment. A person addicted to anger not only meets with more provocations than others from the unhappiness of his

temper, but he draws these provocations on himself, & multiplies them by the meanness of his behavior. The resentment of one that is soon angry is always despised, & his companions are apt to provoke him on purpose to divert themselves with his clamor & violence. It is indeed a most diabolical temper to delight in stirring up the anger of others, & ought to be discouraged with the greatest care, but those who are easily provoked to anger are to be blamed in some degree for this vice in others, as if they were not much too prone to show resentment, others could find no opportunity, or not so frequent ones, to excite it by provocation.

Instruction that is not remembered is totally useless. Now it is impossible that the memories of youth can be stored with useful instructions, or retain salutary maxims, till they are emptied of trifles, quarrels & resentments. The mind must not be occupied with other objects, when it is

applied to its own improvement. It is of the utmost importance, therefore, to youth, to know what they ought not to do, & what they ought not to attend to, in order to their receiving instruction to advantage.

To endeavour fully to understand every thing

that we attempt to learn, is a source of great pleasure to youth, & perhaps contributes more than anything else to render their studies agreeable to them. One can scarcely conceive a more disagreeable state of mind than to be employed about matters which we do not understand, & which consequently can give us no pleasure. There is no desire, says the poet, of a thing that is unknown. Clear & accurate perceptions give pleasure, but reading or committing to memory what we do not understand, is a most disagreeable exercise. To walk in the light gives pleasure from the variety of objects which we distinctly perceive, but to walk in darkness is disagreeable & dangerous, as all objects are then concealed from our sight.

It would contribute much to render the time of study pleasing to youth, if they would begin as early as possible, to distinguish betwixt words & things. For want of this, much of their time is lost, & they are deprived of many pleasures, which are clearly within their reach. A little more attention than they bestow, would bring them to the knowledge of things, which, for want of this attention, never occur to their minds, so that they have only an idea of the bare words, which is displeasing & discouraging to the last degree. This indolence

of conception is the true cause of the difficulty & displeasure, which so many complain of, in the study of Languages. They are continually occupied about objects which they have not taken care to comprehend, & of which they have only an imperfect idea. No man ever yet complained of the hardness of any study that communicated clear ideas to him, & the complaints of the difficulties of the study of Languages proceed much more frequently from indolence than from incapacity on the part of the student. While the understanding is acquiring clear ideas or conceptions, we will be sensible of pleasure, but when through negligence or mean despair of success we rest on words without attending to the things, it is no wonder that we should feel great uneasiness, & long to be released from a labor that yields us neither pleasure nor improvement. As soon as we comprehend the objects with which we are conversant, the difficulty of study is over, & we are in a condition to proceed to other objects, with hope of comprehending them in like manner & with equal ease. It is a confession of dullness, but more frequently an indication of indolence when students complain of the

difficulty of studying languages. In Flanders, an account of the perpetual resort of people of different Nations, Children often learn three or four languages at once, having equal opportunities of hearing them spoke, & this in the same time, & with no greater difficulty than other Children learn their mother tongue. And this acquisition is owing entirely to diligence & application, as the Flemings are no way distinguished from their Neighbours by any superior genius or capacity, but owe every thing, to diligence & application.

A youth of spirit ought to be ashamed to own that he cannot learn Latin & Greek, as it is but declaring in other words that he is too indolent to bestow the pains necessary for acquiring them. It is sometimes alleged as an objection against the study of Languages, that great Blockheads

have been able to acquire them; but admitting this were true, how disgraceful & humiliating is it for a youth to confess himself inferior in capacity & diligence to those very Blockheads, ~~whom~~ whom he affects to despise.?

You ought to be assured that your Teachers in-

tend your real happiness, & the improvement of your Talents, by all the different exercises which they prescribe to you, & instead of assuming to choose what you would be taught, you ought to endeavour diligently to acquire whatever is taught you. It is unreasonable to expect that you should understand the usefulness of any branch of study, till you have fairly acquired it. Private application & exercise of your faculties, as well as frequently reviewing & examining what you have learned, cannot be too often recommended. To expect to learn by public lessons, & the labor of masters only, is to expect to attain the end without the means. When your teachers have given you the best directions, it depends on yourselves to put them in practice. You must join with your Teachers in the business of improving your minds & exercising your faculties, otherwise no success can be expected. Idleness in the intervals of public lessons will destroy the effect of the best instructions, & render them almost wholly useless. Private study, active emulation, & an endeavour to

give an account to your Teachers of the use you have made of your leisure, are therefore absolutely necessary if you expect to study either with pleasure or profit. When your Teachers have prescribed your exercises to your minds & directed you in the manner of performing them, they have done their parts, & it remains that you should do yours. There is no such thing as forced learning. If you are not willing to exert your faculties & exercise them in private, no teachers can be of any service to you.

As Learning is coveted only in order to promote our happiness, be careful to show by your practice that you know how to conduct yourselves properly in acquiring it. Beware of insolence, idleness, trifling & ill Manners. Study to be quiet, & to give no trouble to others. Attend the lessons of your teachers, & be assured that they are capable of directing your studies & your conduct. Those who have not learned to obey, will never be fit to command. Accustom yourselves to rise early & to perform your necessary tasks before you think of any amusement. Your mind must be divided betwixt your task & your play, if you apply to

the latter before the former is finished. Amusement can only be agreeable when labor is over, & your necessary tasks performed, & it can have no relish without the consciousness of having done your duty.

In fine, Consider the dignity & usefulness of Learning, & that it is now your business to acquire it. Be not remiss in your application, & avoid every thing that may hinder your success. The difficulties of study may be conquered by exertion & application, & these are expected of you, because none can perform them for you. Our assistance shall not be wanting, but your success must principally depend on yourselves. If you obey the instructions that are given you, you may expect to be useful in society, honored by the wise, happy in yourselves & the happy instruments of promoting the happiness of the Public.