

Discourse 5. Knowledge its Own End

{99} A UNIVERSITY may be considered with reference either to its Students or to its Studies; and the principle, that all Knowledge is a whole and the separate Sciences parts of one, which I have hitherto been using in behalf of its studies, is equally important when we direct our attention to its students. Now then I turn to the students, and shall consider the education which, by virtue of this principle, a University will give them; and thus I shall be introduced, Gentlemen, to the second question, which I proposed to discuss, viz., whether and in what sense its teaching, viewed relatively to the taught, carries the attribute of Utility along with it.

1.

I have said that all branches of knowledge are connected together, because the subject-matter of knowledge is intimately united in itself, as being the acts and the work of the Creator. Hence it is that the Sciences, into which our knowledge may be said to be cast, have multiplied bearings one on another, and an internal sympathy, and admit, or rather demand, comparison and adjustment. They complete, correct, balance each other. This consideration, if well-founded, must be taken into account, not only as regards the attainment of truth, which is {100} their common end, but as regards the influence which they exercise upon those whose education consists in the study of them. I have said already, that to give undue prominence to one is to be unjust to another; to neglect or supersede these is to divert those from their proper object. It is to unsettle the boundary lines between science and science, to disturb their action, to destroy the harmony which binds them together. Such a proceeding will have a corresponding effect when introduced into a place of education. There is no science but tells a different tale, when viewed as a portion of a whole, from what it is likely to suggest when taken by itself, without the safeguard, as I may call it, of others.

Let me make use of an illustration. In the combination of colours, very different effects are produced by a difference in their selection and juxtaposition; red, green, and white, change their shades, according to the contrast to which they are submitted. And, in like manner, the drift and meaning of a branch of knowledge varies with the company in which it is introduced to the student. If his reading is confined simply to one subject, however such division of labour may favour the advancement of a particular pursuit, a point into which I do not here enter, certainly it has a tendency to contract his mind. If it is incorporated with others, it depends on those others as to the kind of influence which it exerts upon him. Thus the Classics, which in England are the means of refining the taste, have in France subserved the spread of revolutionary and deistical doctrines. In Metaphysics, again, Butler's Analogy of Religion, which has had so much to do with the conversion to the Catholic faith of members of the University of Oxford, appeared to Pitt and others, who had received a different training, to operate only in the direction of infidelity. And so again, Watson, Bishop {101} of Llandaff, as I think he tells us in the narrative of his life, felt the science of Mathematics to indispose the mind to religious belief, while others see in its investigations the best parallel, and thereby defence, of the Christian Mysteries. In like manner, I suppose, Arcesilas would not have handled logic

as Aristotle, nor Aristotle have criticized poets as Plato; yet reasoning and poetry are subject to scientific rules.

It is a great point then to enlarge the range of studies which a University professes, even for the sake of the students; and, though they cannot pursue every subject which is open to them, they will be the gainers by living among those and under those who represent the whole circle. This I conceive to be the advantage of a seat of universal learning, considered as a place of education. An assemblage of learned men, zealous for their own sciences, and rivals of each other, are brought, by familiar intercourse and for the sake of intellectual peace, to adjust together the claims and relations of their respective subjects of investigation. They learn to respect, to consult, to aid each other. Thus is created a pure and clear atmosphere of thought, which the student also breathes, though in his own case he only pursues a few sciences out of the multitude. He profits by an intellectual tradition, which is independent of particular teachers, which guides him in his choice of subjects, and duly interprets for him those which he chooses. He apprehends the great outlines of knowledge, the principles on which it rests, the scale of its parts, its lights and its shades, its great points and its little, as he otherwise cannot apprehend them. Hence it is that his education is called "Liberal." A habit of mind is formed which lasts through life, of which the attributes are, freedom, equitableness, calmness, moderation, and wisdom; or {102} what in a former Discourse I have ventured to call a philosophical habit. This then I would assign as the special fruit of the education furnished at a University, as contrasted with other places of teaching or modes of teaching. This is the main purpose of a University in its treatment of its students.

And now the question is asked me, What is the *use* of it? and my answer will constitute the main subject of the Discourses which are to follow.

2.

Cautious and practical thinkers, I say, will ask of me, what, after all, is the gain of this Philosophy, of which I make such account, and from which I promise so much. Even supposing it to enable us to exercise the degree of trust exactly due to every science respectively, and to estimate precisely the value of every truth which is anywhere to be found, how are we better for this master view of things, which I have been extolling? Does it not reverse the principle of the division of labour? will practical objects be obtained better or worse by its cultivation? to what then does it lead? where does it end? what does it do? how does it profit? what does it promise? Particular sciences are respectively the basis of definite arts, which carry on to results tangible and beneficial the truths which are the subjects of the knowledge attained; what is the Art of this science of sciences? what is the fruit of such a Philosophy? what are we proposing to effect, what inducements do we hold out to the Catholic community, when we set about the enterprise of founding a University?

I am asked what is the end of University Education, and of the Liberal or Philosophical Knowledge which I conceive it to impart: I answer, that what I have already {103} said

has been sufficient to show that it has a very tangible, real, and sufficient end, though the end cannot be divided from that knowledge itself. Knowledge is capable of being its own end. Such is the constitution of the human mind, that any kind of knowledge, if it be really such, is its own reward. And if this is true of all knowledge, it is true also of that special Philosophy, which I have made to consist in a comprehensive view of truth in all its branches, of the relations of science to science, of their mutual bearings, and their respective values. What the worth of such an acquirement is, compared with other objects which we seek,—wealth or power or honour or the conveniences and comforts of life, I do not profess here to discuss; but I would maintain, and mean to show, that it is an object, in its own nature so really and undeniably good, as to be the compensation of a great deal of thought in the compassing, and a great deal of trouble in the attaining.

Now, when I say that Knowledge is, not merely a means to something beyond it, or the preliminary of certain arts into which it naturally resolves, but an end sufficient to rest in and to pursue for its own sake, surely I am uttering no paradox, for I am stating what is both intelligible in itself, and has ever been the common judgment of philosophers and the ordinary feeling of mankind. I am saying what at least the public opinion of this day ought to be slow to deny, considering how much we have heard of late years, in opposition to Religion, of entertaining, curious, and various knowledge. I am but saying what whole volumes have been written to illustrate, viz., by a "selection from the records of Philosophy, Literature, and Art, in all ages and countries, of a body of examples, to show how the most unpropitious circumstances have been unable to conquer an ardent {104} desire for the acquisition of knowledge." [Note 1] That further advantages accrue to us and redound to others by its possession, over and above what it is in itself, I am very far indeed from denying; but, independent of these, we are satisfying a direct need of our nature in its very acquisition; and, whereas our nature, unlike that of the inferior creation, does not at once reach its perfection, but depends, in order to it, on a number of external aids and appliances, Knowledge, as one of the principal of these, is valuable for what its very presence in us does for us after the manner of a habit, even though it be turned to no further account, nor subserve any direct end.

3.

Hence it is that Cicero, in enumerating the various heads of mental excellence, lays down the pursuit of Knowledge for its own sake, as the first of them. "This pertains most of all to human nature," he says, "for we are all of us drawn to the pursuit of Knowledge; in which to excel we consider excellent, whereas to mistake, to err, to be ignorant, to be deceived, is both an evil and a disgrace." [Note 2] And he considers Knowledge the very first object to which we are attracted, after the supply of our physical wants. After the calls and duties of our animal existence, as they may be termed, as regards ourselves, our family, and our neighbours, follows, he tells us, "the search after truth. Accordingly, as soon as we escape from the pressure of necessary cares, forthwith we desire to see, to hear, and to learn; and consider the knowledge of what is hidden or is wonderful a condition of our happiness." {105}

This passage, though it is but one of many similar passages in a multitude of authors, I take for the very reason that it is so familiarly known to us; and I wish you to observe, Gentlemen, how distinctly it separates the pursuit of Knowledge from those ulterior objects to which certainly it can be made to conduce, and which are, I suppose, solely contemplated by the persons who would ask of me the use of a University or Liberal Education. So far from dreaming of the cultivation of Knowledge directly and mainly in order to our physical comfort and enjoyment, for the sake of life and person, of health, of the conjugal and family union, of the social tie and civil security, the great Orator implies, that it is only after our physical and political needs are supplied, and when we are "free from necessary duties and cares," that we are in a condition for "desiring to see, to hear, and to learn." Nor does he contemplate in the least degree the reflex or subsequent action of Knowledge, when acquired, upon those material goods which we set out by securing before we seek it; on the contrary, he expressly denies its bearing upon social life altogether, strange as such a procedure is to those who live after the rise of the Baconian philosophy, and he cautions us against such a cultivation of it as will interfere with our duties to our fellow-creatures. "All these methods," he says, "are engaged in the investigation of truth; by the pursuit of which to be carried off from public occupations is a transgression of duty. For the praise of virtue lies altogether in action; yet intermissions often occur, and then we recur to such pursuits; not to say that the incessant activity of the mind is vigorous enough to carry us on in the pursuit of knowledge, even without any exertion of our own." The idea of benefiting society by means of "the pursuit of science and knowledge" {106} did not enter at all into the motives which he would assign for their cultivation.

This was the ground of the opposition which the elder Cato made to the introduction of Greek Philosophy among his countrymen, when Carneades and his companions, on occasion of their embassy, were charming the Roman youth with their eloquent expositions of it. The fit representative of a practical people, Cato estimated every thing by what it produced; whereas the Pursuit of Knowledge promised nothing beyond Knowledge itself. He despised that refinement or enlargement of mind of which he had no experience.

4.

Things, which can bear to be cut off from every thing else and yet persist in living, must have life in themselves; pursuits, which issue in nothing, and still maintain their ground for ages, which are regarded as admirable, though they have not as yet proved themselves to be useful, must have their sufficient end in themselves, whatever it turn out to be. And we are brought to the same conclusion by considering the force of the epithet, by which the knowledge under consideration is popularly designated. It is common to speak of "*liberal* knowledge," of the "*liberal* arts and studies," and of a "*liberal* education," as the especial characteristic or property of a University and of a gentleman; what is really meant by the word? Now, first, in its grammatical sense it is opposed to *servile*; and by "servile work" is understood, as our catechisms inform us, bodily labour, mechanical employment, and the like, in which the mind has little or no part. Parallel to such servile works are those arts, if they deserve the name, of which the

163 poet speaks [Note 3], {107} which owe their origin and their method to hazard, not to
164 skill; as, for instance, the practice and operations of an empiric. As far as this contrast
165 may be considered as a guide into the meaning of the word, liberal education and liberal
166 pursuits are exercises of mind, of reason, of reflection.

167 But we want something more for its explanation, for there are bodily exercises which are
168 liberal, and mental exercises which are not so. For instance, in ancient times the
169 practitioners in medicine were commonly slaves; yet it was an art as intellectual in its
170 nature, in spite of the pretence, fraud, and quackery with which it might then, as now, be
171 debased, as it was heavenly in its aim. And so in like manner, we contrast a liberal
172 education with a commercial education or a professional; yet no one can deny that
173 commerce and the professions afford scope for the highest and most diversified powers
174 of mind. There is then a great variety of intellectual exercises, which are not technically
175 called "liberal;" on the other hand, I say, there are exercises of the body which do
176 receive that appellation. Such, for instance, was the palæstra, in ancient times; such the
177 Olympic games, in which strength and dexterity of body as well as of mind gained the
178 prize. In Xenophon we read of the young Persian nobility being taught to ride on
179 horseback and to speak the truth; both being among the accomplishments of a
180 gentleman. War, too, however rough a profession, has ever been accounted liberal,
181 unless in cases when it becomes heroic, which would introduce us to another subject.

182 Now comparing these instances together, we shall have no difficulty in determining the
183 principle of this apparent variation in the application of the term which I am examining.
184 Manly games, or games of skill, or {108} military prowess, though bodily, are, it seems,
185 accounted liberal; on the other hand, what is merely professional, though highly
186 intellectual, nay, though liberal in comparison of trade and manual labour, is not simply
187 called liberal, and mercantile occupations are not liberal at all. Why this distinction?
188 because that alone is liberal knowledge, which stands on its own pretensions, which is
189 independent of sequel, expects no complement, refuses to be *informed* (as it is called)
190 by any end, or absorbed into any art, in order duly to present itself to our contemplation.
191 The most ordinary pursuits have this specific character, if they are self-sufficient and
192 complete; the highest lose it, when they minister to something beyond them. It is absurd
193 to balance, in point of worth and importance, a treatise on reducing fractures with a
194 game of cricket or a fox-chase; yet of the two the bodily exercise has that quality which
195 we call "liberal," and the intellectual has it not. And so of the learned professions
196 altogether, considered merely as professions; although one of them be the most
197 popularly beneficial, and another the most politically important, and the third the most
198 intimately divine of all human pursuits, yet the very greatness of their end, the health of
199 the body, or of the commonwealth, or of the soul, diminishes, not increases, their claim
200 to the appellation "liberal," and that still more, if they are cut down to the strict
201 exigencies of that end. If, for instance, Theology, instead of being cultivated as a
202 contemplation, be limited to the purposes of the pulpit or be represented by the
203 catechism, it loses,—not its usefulness, not its divine character, not its meritoriousness
204 (rather it gains a claim upon these titles by such charitable condescension),—but it does
205 lose the particular attribute which I am illustrating; just as a face worn by tears and
206 fasting loses its beauty, or a {109} labourer's hand loses its delicateness;—for Theology

207 thus exercised is not simple knowledge, but rather is an art or a business making use of
208 Theology. And thus it appears that even what is supernatural need not be liberal, nor
209 need a hero be a gentleman, for the plain reason that one idea is not another idea. And
210 in like manner the Baconian Philosophy, by using its physical sciences in the service of
211 man, does thereby transfer them from the order of Liberal Pursuits to, I do not say the
212 inferior, but the distinct class of the Useful. And, to take a different instance, hence
213 again, as is evident, whenever personal gain is the motive, still more distinctive an effect
214 has it upon the character of a given pursuit; thus racing, which was a liberal exercise in
215 Greece, forfeits its rank in times like these, so far as it is made the occasion of
216 gambling.

217 All that I have been now saying is summed up in a few characteristic words of the great
218 Philosopher. "Of possessions," he says, "those rather are useful, which bear fruit; those
219 *liberal, which tend to enjoyment*. By fruitful, I mean, which yield revenue; by enjoyable,
220 where *nothing accrues of consequence beyond the using*." [\[Note 4\]](#)

5.

221 Do not suppose, that in thus appealing to the ancients, I am throwing back the world two
222 thousand years, and fettering Philosophy with the reasonings of paganism. While the
223 world lasts, will Aristotle's doctrine on these matters last, for he is the oracle of nature
224 and of truth. While we are men, we cannot help, to a great extent, being Aristotelians,
225 for the great Master does but analyze the thoughts, feelings, views, and opinions of
226 human kind. He has told us the meaning of our own words and ideas, {110} before we
227 were born. In many subject-matters, to think correctly, is to think like Aristotle; and we
228 are his disciples whether we will or no, though we may not know it. Now, as to the
229 particular instance before us, the word "liberal" as applied to Knowledge and Education,
230 expresses a specific idea, which ever has been, and ever will be, while the nature of
231 man is the same, just as the idea of the Beautiful is specific, or of the Sublime, or of the
232 Ridiculous, or of the Sordid. It is in the world now, it was in the world then; and, as in the
233 case of the dogmas of faith, it is illustrated by a continuous historical tradition, and never
234 was out of the world, from the time it came into it. There have indeed been differences
235 of opinion from time to time, as to what pursuits and what arts came under that idea, but
236 such differences are but an additional evidence of its reality. That idea must have a
237 substance in it, which has maintained its ground amid these conflicts and changes,
238 which has ever served as a standard to measure things withal, which has passed from
239 mind to mind unchanged, when there was so much to colour, so much to influence any
240 notion or thought whatever, which was not founded in our very nature. Were it a mere
241 generalization, it would have varied with the subjects from which it was generalized; but
242 though its subjects vary with the age, it varies not itself. The palæstra may seem a
243 liberal exercise to Lycurgus, and illiberal to Seneca; coach-driving and prize-fighting
244 may be recognized in Elis, and be condemned in England; music may be despicable in
245 the eyes of certain moderns, and be in the highest place with Aristotle and Plato,—(and
246 the case is the same in the particular application of the idea of Beauty, or of Goodness,
247 or of Moral Virtue, there is a difference of tastes, a difference of judgments)—still these
248 variations {111} imply, instead of discrediting, the archetypal idea, which is but a

249 previous hypothesis or condition, by means of which issue is joined between contending
250 opinions, and without which there would be nothing to dispute about.

251 I consider, then, that I am chargeable with no paradox, when I speak of a Knowledge
252 which is its own end, when I call it liberal knowledge, or a gentleman's knowledge, when
253 I educate for it, and make it the scope of a University. And still less am I incurring such a
254 charge, when I make this acquisition consist, not in Knowledge in a vague and ordinary
255 sense, but in that Knowledge which I have especially called Philosophy or, in an
256 extended sense of the word, Science; for whatever claims Knowledge has to be
257 considered as a good, these it has in a higher degree when it is viewed not vaguely, not
258 popularly, but precisely and transcendently as Philosophy. Knowledge, I say, is then
259 especially liberal, or sufficient for itself, apart from every external and ulterior object,
260 when and so far as it is philosophical, and this I proceed to show.

6.

261 Now bear with me, Gentlemen, if what I am about to say, has at first sight a fanciful
262 appearance. Philosophy, then, or Science, is related to Knowledge in this way:—
263 Knowledge is called by the name of Science or Philosophy, when it is acted upon,
264 informed, or if I may use a strong figure, impregnated by Reason. Reason is the
265 principle of that intrinsic fecundity of Knowledge, which, to those who possess it, is its
266 especial value, and which dispenses with the necessity of their looking abroad for any
267 end to rest upon external to itself. Knowledge, indeed, when thus exalted into a
268 scientific form, is also {112} power; not only is it excellent in itself, but whatever such
269 excellence may be, it is something more, it has a result beyond itself. Doubtless; but
270 that is a further consideration, with which I am not concerned. I only say that, prior to its
271 being a power, it is a good; that it is, not only an instrument, but an end. I know well it
272 may resolve itself into an art, and terminate in a mechanical process, and in tangible
273 fruit; but it also may fall back upon that Reason which informs it, and resolve itself into
274 Philosophy. In one case it is called Useful Knowledge, in the other Liberal. The same
275 person may cultivate it in both ways at once; but this again is a matter foreign to my
276 subject; here I do but say that there are two ways of using Knowledge, and in matter of
277 fact those who use it in one way are not likely to use it in the other, or at least in a very
278 limited measure. You see, then, here are two methods of Education; the end of the one
279 is to be philosophical, of the other to be mechanical; the one rises towards general
280 ideas, the other is exhausted upon what is particular and external. Let me not be
281 thought to deny the necessity, or to decry the benefit, of such attention to what is
282 particular and practical, as belongs to the useful or mechanical arts; life could not go on
283 without them; we owe our daily welfare to them; their exercise is the duty of the many,
284 and we owe to the many a debt of gratitude for fulfilling that duty. I only say that
285 Knowledge, in proportion as it tends more and more to be particular, ceases to be
286 Knowledge. It is a question whether Knowledge can in any proper sense be predicated
287 of the brute creation; without pretending to metaphysical exactness of phraseology,
288 which would be unsuitable to an occasion like this, I say, it seems to me improper to call
289 that passive sensation, or perception of things, which brutes seem to {113} possess, by
290 the name of Knowledge. When I speak of Knowledge, I mean something intellectual,

something which grasps what it perceives through the senses; something which takes a view of things; which sees more than the senses convey; which reasons upon what it sees, and while it sees; which invests it with an idea. It expresses itself, not in a mere enunciation, but by an enthymeme: it is of the nature of science from the first, and in this consists its dignity. The principle of real dignity in Knowledge, its worth, its desirableness, considered irrespectively of its results, is this germ within it of a scientific or a philosophical process. This is how it comes to be an end in itself; this is why it admits of being called Liberal. Not to know the relative disposition of things is the state of slaves or children; to have mapped out the Universe is the boast, or at least the ambition, of Philosophy.

Moreover, such knowledge is not a mere extrinsic or accidental advantage, which is ours today and another's tomorrow, which may be got up from a book, and easily forgotten again, which we can command or communicate at our pleasure, which we can borrow for the occasion, carry about in our hand, and take into the market; it is an acquired illumination, it is a habit, a personal possession, and an inward endowment. And this is the reason, why it is more correct, as well as more usual, to speak of a University as a place of education, than of instruction, though, when knowledge is concerned, instruction would at first sight have seemed the more appropriate word. We are instructed, for instance, in manual exercises, in the fine and useful arts, in trades, and in ways of business; for these are methods, which have little or no effect upon the mind itself, are contained in rules committed to memory, to tradition, or to use, {114} and bear upon an end external to themselves. But education is a higher word; it implies an action upon our mental nature, and the formation of a character; it is something individual and permanent, and is commonly spoken of in connexion with religion and virtue. When, then, we speak of the communication of Knowledge as being Education, we thereby really imply that that Knowledge is a state or condition of mind; and since cultivation of mind is surely worth seeking for its own sake, we are thus brought once more to the conclusion, which the word "Liberal" and the word "Philosophy" have already suggested, that there is a Knowledge, which is desirable, though nothing come of it, as being of itself a treasure, and a sufficient remuneration of years of labour.

7.

This, then, is the answer which I am prepared to give to the question with which I opened this Discourse. Before going on to speak of the object of the Church in taking up Philosophy, and the uses to which she puts it, I am prepared to maintain that Philosophy is its own end, and, as I conceive, I have now begun the proof of it. I am prepared to maintain that there is a knowledge worth possessing for what it is, and not merely for what it does; and what minutes remain to me today I shall devote to the removal of some portion of the indistinctness and confusion with which the subject may in some minds be surrounded.

It may be objected then, that, when we profess to seek Knowledge for some end or other beyond itself, whatever it be, we speak intelligibly; but that, whatever men may have said, however obstinately the idea may have kept its ground from age to age, still

it is {115} simply unmeaning to say that we seek Knowledge for its own sake, and for nothing else; for that it ever leads to something beyond itself, which therefore is its end, and the cause why it is desirable;—moreover, that this end is twofold, either of this world or of the next; that all knowledge is cultivated either for secular objects or for eternal; that if it is directed to secular objects, it is called Useful Knowledge, if to eternal, Religious or Christian Knowledge;—in consequence, that if, as I have allowed, this Liberal Knowledge does not benefit the body or estate, it ought to benefit the soul; but if the fact be really so, that it is neither a physical or a secular good on the one hand, nor a moral good on the other, it cannot be a good at all, and is not worth the trouble which is necessary for its acquisition.

And then I may be reminded that the professors of this Liberal or Philosophical Knowledge have themselves, in every age, recognized this exposition of the matter, and have submitted to the issue in which it terminates; for they have ever been attempting to make men virtuous; or, if not, at least have assumed that refinement of mind was virtue, and that they themselves were the virtuous portion of mankind. This they have professed on the one hand; and on the other, they have utterly failed in their professions, so as ever to make themselves a proverb among men, and a laughing-stock both to the grave and the dissipated portion of mankind, in consequence of them. Thus they have furnished against themselves both the ground and the means of their own exposure, without any trouble at all to any one else. In a word, from the time that Athens was the University of the world, what has Philosophy taught men, but to promise without practising, and to aspire without attaining? What has the deep and lofty thought of its disciples ended in but {116} eloquent words? Nay, what has its teaching ever meditated, when it was boldest in its remedies for human ill, beyond charming us to sleep by its lessons, that we might feel nothing at all? like some melodious air, or rather like those strong and transporting perfumes, which at first spread their sweetness over every thing they touch, but in a little while do but offend in proportion as they once pleased us. Did Philosophy support Cicero under the disfavour of the fickle populace, or nerve Seneca to oppose an imperial tyrant? It abandoned Brutus, as he sorrowfully confessed, in his greatest need, and it forced Cato, as his panegyrist strangely boasts, into the false position of defying heaven. How few can be counted among its professors, who, like Polemo, were thereby converted from a profligate course, or like Anaxagoras, thought the world well lost in exchange for its possession? The philosopher in Rasselas taught a superhuman doctrine, and then succumbed without an effort to a trial of human affection.

"He discoursed," we are told, "with great energy on the government of the passions. His look was venerable, his action graceful, his pronunciation clear, and his diction elegant. He showed, with great strength of sentiment and variety of illustration, that human nature is degraded and debased, when the lower faculties predominate over the higher. He communicated the various precepts given, from time to time, for the conquest of passion, and displayed the happiness of those who had obtained the important victory, after which man is no longer the slave of fear, nor the fool of hope ... He enumerated many examples of heroes immoveable by pain or pleasure, who looked with

375 indifference on those modes or accidents to which the vulgar give the names of good
376 and evil." {117}

377 Rasselas in a few days found the philosopher in a room half darkened, with his eyes
378 misty, and his face pale. "Sir," said he, "you have come at a time when all human
379 friendship is useless; what I suffer cannot be remedied, what I have lost cannot be
380 supplied. My daughter, my only daughter, from whose tenderness I expected all the
381 comforts of my age, died last night of a fever." "Sir," said the prince, "mortality is an
382 event by which a wise man can never be surprised; we know that death is always near,
383 and it should therefore always be expected." "Young man," answered the philosopher,
384 "you speak like one who has never felt the pangs of separation." "Have you, then, forgot
385 the precept," said Rasselas, "which you so powerfully enforced? ... consider that
386 external things are naturally variable, but truth and reason are always the same." "What
387 comfort," said the mourner, "can truth and reason afford me? Of what effect are they
388 now, but to tell me that my daughter will not be restored?"

8.

389 Better, far better, to make no professions, you will say, than to cheat others with what
390 we are not, and to scandalize them with what we are. The sensualist, or the man of the
391 world, at any rate is not the victim of fine words, but pursues a reality and gains it. The
392 Philosophy of Utility, you will say, Gentlemen, has at least done its work; and I grant
393 it,—it aimed low, but it has fulfilled its aim. If that man of great intellect who has been its
394 Prophet in the conduct of life played false to his own professions, he was not bound by
395 his philosophy to be true to his friend or faithful in his trust. Moral virtue was not the line
396 in which he undertook to instruct men; and though, as the poet calls him, he were the
397 {118} "meanest" of mankind, he was so in what may be called his private capacity and
398 without any prejudice to the theory of induction. He had a right to be so, if he chose, for
399 any thing that the Idols of the den or the theatre had to say to the contrary. His mission
400 was the increase of physical enjoyment and social comfort [Note 5]; and most
401 wonderfully, most awfully has he fulfilled his conception and his design. Almost day by
402 day have we fresh and fresh shoots, and buds, and blossoms, which are to ripen into
403 fruit, on that magical tree of Knowledge which he planted, and to which none of us
404 perhaps, except the very poor, but owes, if not his present life, at least his daily food, his
405 health, and general well-being. He was the divinely provided minister of temporal
406 benefits to all of us so great, that, whatever I am forced to think of him as a man, I have
407 not the heart, from mere gratitude, to speak of him severely. And, in spite of the
408 tendencies of his philosophy, which are, as we see at this day, to depreciate, or to
409 trample on Theology, he has himself, in his writings, gone out of his way, as if with a
410 prophetic misgiving of those tendencies, to insist on it as the instrument of that
411 beneficent Father [Note 6], who, when He came on earth in visible form, took on Him
412 first and most prominently {119} the office of assuaging the bodily wounds of human
413 nature. And truly, like the old mediciner in the tale, "he sat diligently at his work, and
414 hummed, with cheerful countenance, a pious song;" and then in turn "went out singing
415 into the meadows so gaily, that those who had seen him from afar might well have

416 thought it was a youth gathering flowers for his beloved, instead of an old physician
417 gathering healing herbs in the morning dew." [\[Note 7\]](#)

418 Alas, that men, in the action of life or in their heart of hearts, are not what they seem to
419 be in their moments of excitement, or in their trances or intoxications of genius,—so
420 good, so noble, so serene! Alas, that Bacon too in his own way should after all be but
421 the fellow of those heathen philosophers who in their disadvantages had some excuse
422 for their inconsistency, and who surprise us rather in what they did say than in what they
423 did not do! Alas, that he too, like Socrates or Seneca, must be stripped of his holy-day
424 coat, which looks so fair, and should be but a mockery amid his most majestic gravity of
425 phrase; and, for all his vast abilities, should, in the littleness of his own moral being, but
426 typify the intellectual narrowness of his school! However, granting all this, heroism after
427 all was not his philosophy:—I cannot deny he has abundantly achieved what he
428 proposed. His is simply a Method whereby bodily discomforts and temporal wants are to
429 be most effectually removed from the greatest number; and already, before it has
430 shown any signs of exhaustion, the gifts of nature, in their most artificial shapes and
431 luxurious profusion and diversity, from all quarters of the earth, are, it is undeniable, by
432 its means brought even to our doors, and we rejoice in them.

9.

433 {120} Useful Knowledge then, I grant, has done its work; and Liberal Knowledge as
434 certainly has not done its work,—that is, supposing, as the objectors assume, its direct
435 end, like Religious Knowledge, is to make men better; but this I will not for an instant
436 allow, and, unless I allow it, those objectors have said nothing to the purpose. I admit,
437 rather I maintain, what they have been urging, for I consider Knowledge to have its end
438 in itself. For all its friends, or its enemies, may say, I insist upon it, that it is as real a
439 mistake to burden it with virtue or religion as with the mechanical arts. Its direct
440 business is not to steel the soul against temptation or to console it in affliction, any more
441 than to set the loom in motion, or to direct the steam carriage; be it ever so much the
442 means or the condition of both material and moral advancement, still, taken by and in
443 itself, it as little mends our hearts as it improves our temporal circumstances. And if its
444 eulogists claim for it such a power, they commit the very same kind of encroachment on
445 a province not their own as the political economist who should maintain that his science
446 educated him for casuistry or diplomacy. Knowledge is one thing, virtue is another; good
447 sense is not conscience, refinement is not humility, nor is largeness and justness of
448 view faith. Philosophy, however enlightened, however profound, gives no command
449 over the passions, no influential motives, no vivifying principles. Liberal Education
450 makes not the Christian, not the Catholic, but the gentleman. It is well to be a
451 gentlemen, it is well to have a cultivated intellect, a delicate taste, a candid, equitable,
452 dispassionate mind, a noble and courteous bearing in the conduct of life;—these are the
453 {121} connatural qualities of a large knowledge; they are the objects of a University; I
454 am advocating, I shall illustrate and insist upon them; but still, I repeat, they are no
455 guarantee for sanctity or even for conscientiousness, they may attach to the man of the
456 world, to the profligate, to the heartless,—pleasant, alas, and attractive as he shows
457 when decked out in them. Taken by themselves, they do but seem to be what they are

458 not; they look like virtue at a distance, but they are detected by close observers, and on
459 the long run; and hence it is that they are popularly accused of pretence and hypocrisy,
460 not, I repeat, from their own fault, but because their professors and their admirers
461 persist in taking them for what they are not, and are officious in arrogating for them a
462 praise to which they have no claim. Quarry the granite rock with razors, or moor the
463 vessel with a thread of silk; then may you hope with such keen and delicate instruments
464 as human knowledge and human reason to contend against those giants, the passion
465 and the pride of man.

466 Surely we are not driven to theories of this kind, in order to vindicate the value and
467 dignity of Liberal Knowledge. Surely the real grounds on which its pretensions rest are
468 not so very subtle or abstruse, so very strange or improbable. Surely it is very intelligible
469 to say, and that is what I say here, that Liberal Education, viewed in itself, is simply the
470 cultivation of the intellect, as such, and its object is nothing more or less than intellectual
471 excellence. Every thing has its own perfection, be it higher or lower in the scale of
472 things; and the perfection of one is not the perfection of another. Things animate,
473 inanimate, visible, invisible, all are good in their kind, and have a *best* of themselves,
474 which is an object of pursuit. Why do you take such pains with {122} your garden or
475 your park? You see to your walks and turf and shrubberies; to your trees and drives; not
476 as if you meant to make an orchard of the one, or corn or pasture land of the other, but
477 because there is a special beauty in all that is goodly in wood, water, plain, and slope,
478 brought all together by art into one shape, and grouped into one whole. Your cities are
479 beautiful, your palaces, your public buildings, your territorial mansions, your churches;
480 and their beauty leads to nothing beyond itself. There is a physical beauty and a moral:
481 there is a beauty of person, there is a beauty of our moral being, which is natural virtue;
482 and in like manner there is a beauty, there is a perfection, of the intellect. There is an
483 ideal perfection in these various subject-matters, towards which individual instances are
484 seen to rise, and which are the standards for all instances whatever. The Greek
485 divinities and demigods, as the statuary has moulded them, with their symmetry of
486 figure, and their high forehead and their regular features, are the perfection of physical
487 beauty. The heroes, of whom history tells, Alexander, or Cæsar, or Scipio, or Saladin,
488 are the representatives of that magnanimity or self-mastery which is the greatness of
489 human nature. Christianity too has its heroes, and in the supernatural order, and we call
490 them Saints. The artist puts before him beauty of feature and form; the poet, beauty of
491 mind; the preacher, the beauty of grace: then intellect too, I repeat, has its beauty, and it
492 has those who aim at it. To open the mind, to correct it, to refine it, to enable it to know,
493 and to digest, master, rule, and use its knowledge, to give it power over its own
494 faculties, application, flexibility, method, critical exactness, sagacity, resource, address,
495 eloquent expression, is an object as intelligible (for here we are inquiring, not what the
496 object of a {123} Liberal Education is worth, nor what use the Church makes of it, but
497 what it is in itself), I say, an object as intelligible as the cultivation of virtue, while, at the
498 same time, it is absolutely distinct from it.

10.

499 This indeed is but a temporal object, and a transitory possession; but so are other
500 things in themselves which we make much of and pursue. The moralist will tell us that
501 man, in all his functions, is but a flower which blossoms and fades, except so far as a
502 higher principle breathes upon him, and makes him and what he is immortal. Body and
503 mind are carried on into an eternal state of being by the gifts of Divine Munificence; but
504 at first they do but fail in a failing world; and if the powers of intellect decay, the powers
505 of the body have decayed before them, and, as an Hospital or an Almshouse, though its
506 end be ephemeral, may be sanctified to the service of religion, so surely may a
507 University, even were it nothing more than I have as yet described it. We attain to
508 heaven by using this world well, though it is to pass away; we perfect our nature, not by
509 undoing it, but by adding to it what is more than nature, and directing it towards aims
510 higher than its own.

511 [Notes](#)

512 1. Pursuit of Knowledge under Difficulties. Introd.

513 2. Cicer. Offic. init.

514 3. [*Techne tuchēn esterxe kai tuchē technēn.*] Vid. Arist. Nic. Ethic. vi.

515 4. Aristot. Rhet. i. 5.

516 5. It will be seen that on the whole I agree with Lord Macaulay in his Essay on Bacon's
517 Philosophy. I do not know whether he would agree with me.

518 6. De Augment. iv. 2, vid. Macaulay's Essay; vid. also "In principio operis ad Deum
519 Patrem, Deum Verbum, Deum Spiritum, preces fundimus humillimas et ardentissimas,
520 ut humani generis ærumnarum memores, et peregrinationis istius vitæ, in quâ dies
521 paucos et malos terimus, *novis suis eleemosynis, per manus nostras*, familiam
522 humanam dotare dignentur. Atque illud insuper supplices rogamus, ne *humana divinis*
523 *officiant*; neve *ex reseratione viarum sensûs*, et accensione majore luminis naturalis,
524 *aliquid incredulitatis* et noctis, animis nostris erga divina mysteria oboriatur," etc. *Præf.*
525 Instaur. Magn.

526 [Return to text](#)

527 7. Fouque's Unknown Patient.