Introductory Lecture as Professor of Latin

A. E. Housman
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Every exercise of our faculties, says Aristotle, has some good for its aim; and if he speaks true it becomes a matter of importance that when we exert any special faculty we should clearly apprehend the special good at which we are aiming. What now is the good which we set before us as our end when we exercise our faculties in acquiring knowledge, in learning? The answers differ, and they differ for this reason – that people seldom approach the question impartially, but usually bring with them a prepossession in favour of this or that department of knowledge. Everyone has his favourite study, and he is therefore disposed to lay down, as the aim of learning in general, the aim which his favourite study seems specially fitted to achieve, and the recognition of which as the aim of learning in general would increase the popularity of that study and the importance of those who profess it. This method, conclusion first, reasons afterwards, has always been in high favour with the human race: you write down at the outset the answer to the sum; then you proceed to fabricate, not for use but for exhibition to the public, the ciphering by which you can pretend to have arrived at it. The method has one obvious advantage, – that you are thus quite sure of reaching the conclusion you want to reach: if you began with your reasons there is no telling where they might lead you, and like enough you would never get to the desired conclusion at all. But it has one drawback, – that unanimity is thus unattainable: every man gives the answer which seems right in his own eyes. And accordingly we find that the aim of acquiring knowledge is differently defined by different people. In how many different ways, I do not know; but it will be sufficient for to-day to consider the answers given by two great parties: the advocates of those sciences which have now succeeded in arrogating to themselves the name of Science, and of those studies which call themselves by the title, perhaps equally arrogant, of Humane Letters.

The partisans of Science define the aim of learning to be utility. I do not mean to say that any eminent man of science commits himself to this opinion: some of them have publicly and scornfully repudiated it, and all of them, I imagine, reject it in their hearts. But there is no denying that this is the view which makes Science popular; this is the impression under which the British merchant or manufacturer dies and leaves his money to endow scientific education. And since this impression, though false, is nevertheless beneficent in its results, those who are interested in scientific pursuits may very well consider that it is no business of theirs to dispel a delusion which promises so well for the world in general and for themselves in particular. The popular view, I say, is that the aim of acquiring knowledge is to equip one's self for the business of life; that accordingly the knowledge most to be sought after is the knowledge which equips one best; and that this knowledge is Science. And the popular view has the very distinguished countenance of Mr Herbert Spencer. Mr Spencer, in his well-known treatise on Education, pronounces that education to be of most value which prepares us for self-preservation by preparing us for securing the necessaries of life; and that is education in the sciences. 'For,' says he, 'leaving out only some very small classes, what are all men employed in? They are employed in the production, preparation and distribution of commodities. And on what does efficiency in the production, preparation and distribution of commodities depend? It depends on the use of methods fitted to the respective natures of these commodities; it depends on an adequate acquaintance with their physical, chemical and vital properties, as the case may be; that is, it depends on Science.' And then he proceeds with his usual exactness of detail to shew in what way each several science serves to render one efficient in producing, preparing or distributing commodities.

Now to begin with, it is evident that if we are to pursue Science simply in order to obtain an adequate acquaintance with the physical, chemical and vital properties of the commodities which we produce, prepare or distribute, we shall not need to pursue Science far. Mr Spencer duly rehearses the list of the sciences, and is at much pains to demonstrate the bearing of each science on the arts of life. Take one for a specimen. I suppose that in no science

have Englishmen more distinguished themselves than in astronomy: one need but mention the name of Isaac Newton. And it is a science which has not only fascinated the profoundest intellects but has always laid a strong hold on the popular imagination, so that, for example, our newspapers found it paid them to fill a good deal of space with articles about the present opposition of the planet Mars. And now listen to the reasons why we are to study astronomy. 'Of the concrete sciences we come first to Astronomy. Out of this has grown that art of navigation which has made possible the enormous foreign commerce that supports a large part of our population, while supplying us with many necessaries and most of our luxuries.' That is all there is to say about astronomy: that navigation has grown out of it. Well then, we want no Isaac Newtons; let them carry their Principias to another market. Astronomy is a squeezed orange as far as we are concerned. Astronomers may transfer their residence to the remotest world they can discover, and welcome, for all the need we have of them here: the enormous foreign commerce which Mr Spencer speaks of will still enable this island to be over-populated, and our currants and cocoanuts will continue to arrive with their former regularity. Hundreds and hundreds of years ago astronomy had reached the point which satisfies our modest requirements: it had given birth to navigation. They were conversing in Athens four centuries before Christ, and a young Spencerian named Glaucon already found more than this to say in praise of the utility of astronomy. 'Shall we make astronomy one of our studies,' asked Socrates, 'or do you dissent?' 'No, I agree,' said Glaucon, 'for to have an intimate acquaintance with seasons, and months, and years, is an advantage not only to the farmer and the navigator, but also, in an equal degree, to the general,' – an aspect of astronomical science which appears to have escaped Mr Spencer's notice.

Astronomy, you may say, is not a fair example to take, because of all sciences it is perhaps the one which least concerns the arts of life. May be; but this difference between astronomy and other sciences is a difference of degree alone. Just as even astronomy, though it touches practical life but little, does nevertheless touch it, so those sciences, such as chemistry and physics, which are the most intimately and widely concerned with practical

life, nevertheless throughout a great portion of their range have no contact with it at all. If it is in order to secure the necessaries of life that we are to study chemistry and physics, we shall study them further no doubt than we shall for that reason study astronomy, but not so far by a long way as chemists and physicists do in fact study them now. Electric lighting and aniline dyes and other such magnificent alleviations of human destiny do not spring into being at every forward step in our knowledge of the physical forces and chemical composition of the universe: they are merely occasional incidents, flowers by the way. Much in both sciences which the chemist and the physicist study with intense interest and delight will be set aside as curious and unprofitable learning by our producer, preparer or distributor of commodities. In short, the fact is, that what man will seek to acquaint himself with in order to prepare him for securing the necessaries of life is not Science, but the indispensable minimum of Science.

And just as our knowledge of Science need not be deep, so too it need not be wide. Mr Spencer shews that every science is of some use to some man or another. But not every science is of use to every man. Geometry, he points out, is useful to the carpenter, and chemistry to the calico-printer. True; but geometry is not useful to the calico-printer, nor chemistry to the carpenter. If it is to serve the necessaries of life that men pursue Science, the sciences that each man needs to pursue are few. In addition to the initial studies of reading, writing and arithmetic, he needs to acquaint himself with those sciences, or rather, as I said before, with the indispensable minimum of those sciences, which concern the trade or the art he earns his bread by: the dyer with chemistry, the carpenter with geometry, the navigator with astronomy. But there he can stop. Mr Spencer appears to apprehend this; and since such a result is far from his desires, he attempts, in the case of one or two sciences, to shew that no one can neglect them with impunity. The following, for instance, is the method by which he endeavours to terrorise us into studying geology. We may, any of us, some day, take shares in a joint-stock company; and that company may engage in mining operations; and those operations may be directed to the discovery of coal; and for want of geological information the joint-stock company may go mining for coal

under the old red sandstone, where there is no coal; and then the mining operations will be fruitless, and the joint-stock company will come to grief, and where shall we be then? This is, indeed, to eat the bread of carefulness. After all, men have been known to complete their pilgrimage through this vale of tears without taking shares in a joint-stock company. But the true reply to Mr Spencer's intimidations I take to be this: that the attempt to fortify man's estate against all contingencies by such precautions as these is in the first place interminable, and in the second place hopeless. As Sarpedon says to Glaucus in the Iliad, a hundred thousand fates stand close to us always, which none can flee and none avoid. The complexity of the universe is infinite, and the days of a man's life are threescore years and ten. One lifetime, nine lifetimes are not long enough for the task of blocking every cranny through which calamity may enter. And say that we could thus triumphantly succeed in the attempt at self-preservation; say that we could thus impregnably secure the necessaries of existence; even then the true business of life is not so much as begun. Existence is not itself a good thing, that we should spend a lifetime securing its necessaries: a life spent, however victoriously, in securing the necessaries of life is no more than an elaborate furnishing and decoration of apartments for the reception of a guest who is never to come. Our business here is not to live, but to live happily. We may seem to be occupied, as Mr Spencer says, in the production, preparation and distribution of commodities; but our true occupation is to manufacture from the raw material of life the fabric of happiness; and if we are ever to set about our work we must make up our minds to risk something. Absolute security for existence is unattainable, and no wise man will pursue it; for if we must go to these lengths in the attempt at self-preservation we shall die before ever we have begun to live. Reasonable security is attainable; but it is attainable without any wide study of Science.

And if we grant for the moment that to secure the necessaries of life is the true aim of Science, and if we also grant, as we well may, that Science is really of some use in compassing that aim, still it is apparent that other things compass it much more effectually than Science. It is not found in experience that men of science are those who make the largest fortunes out

of the production, preparation and distribution of commodities. The men who have risen, if you can call it rising, from barge-boys to millionaires, have not risen by their knowledge of science. They have sometimes risen by other people's knowledge of science, but their own contribution to their success, so far as it consists in knowledge at all, consists rather in their knowledge of business and their knowledge of men. Therefore, to sum up, when we find that for purposes of practical utility we need no wide knowledge of the sciences and no deep knowledge of any science, and that even for these purposes Science is not the most serviceable sort of knowledge, surely we are justified in concluding that the true aim of Science is something other than utility.

While the partisans of Science define the end of education as the useful, the partisans of the Humanities define it, more sublimely, as the good and the beautiful. We study, they say, not that we may earn a livelihood, but that we may transform and beautify our inner nature by culture. Therefore the true and the really valuable knowledge is that which is properly and distinctively human; the knowledge, as Matthew Arnold used to call it, of the best which has been said and thought in the world, – the literature which contains the history of the spirit of man.

Here indeed is an aim which no one will pretend to despise. The names of the good and the beautiful are treated with respect even by those who give themselves little trouble about the things; and if the study of the Humanities will really transform and beautify our inner nature, it will be acknowledged that, so soon as we have acquired, with all possible despatch, that minimum of scientific knowledge which is necessary to put our material welfare in a state of reasonable security, we ought to apply ourselves earnestly and long to the study of the Humanities. And as a man should always magnify his own office, nothing could be more natural or agreeable to me than to embrace this opinion and to deliver here a panegyric of the Humanities and especially of that study on which the Humanities are founded, the study of the dead languages of Greece and Rome. I am deterred from doing so, in the first place, because it is possible that a partisan harangue of that sort might not be relished by the united Faculties of Arts, Laws and Science; and secondly

because to tell the truth I do not much believe in these supposed effects of classical studies. I do not believe that the proportion of the human race whose inner nature the study of the classics will specially transform and beautify is large; and I am quite sure that the proportion of the human race on whom the classics will confer that benefit can attain the desired end without that minute and accurate study of the classical tongues which affords Latin professors their only excuse for existing.

How shall we judge whether a man's nature has been transformed and beautified? and where will the transformation and beautification begin? I never yet heard it maintained by the wildest enthusiast for Classics that the standard of morality or even of amiability is higher among classical scholars than among men of science. The special benefit which those studies are supposed, and in some cases justly supposed, to confer, is to quicken our appreciation of what is excellent and what is not. And since literature is the instrument by which this education is imparted, it is in the domain of literature that this quickened appreciation and sharpened discrimination ought first to display themselves. If anyone wants convincing of the inestimable value of a classical education to those who are naturally qualified to profit from it, let him compare our two greatest poets, Shakespeare and Milton, and see what the classics did for one and what the lack of the classics did for the other. Milton was steeped through and through with classical literature; and he is the one English poet from whom an Englishman ignorant of Greek and Latin can learn what the great classics were like. Mark: the classics cannot be said to have succeeded altogether in transforming and beautifying Milton's inner nature. They did not sweeten his naturally disagreeable temper; they did not enable him to conduct controversy with urbanity or even with decency. But in the province of literature, where their influence is soonest and more powerfully exerted, they conferred on him all the benefits which their encomiasts ascribe to them. The dignity, the sanity, the unfaltering elevation of style, the just subordination of detail, the due adaptation of means to ends, the high respect of the craftsman for his craft and for himself, which ennoble Virgil and the great Greeks, are all to be found in Milton, and nowhere else in English literature are they to be found: certainly

not in Shakespeare. In richness of natural endowment Shakespeare was the superior even of Milton; but he had small Latin and less Greek, and the result – I do not know that Samuel Johnson states the result too harshly when he has the noble courage to say that Shakespeare has nowhere written more than six consecutive lines of good poetry. It is told in a Christian legend that when St Paul was in Italy he was led to Virgil's grave at Parthenope, and that he wept over it and said 'O Chief of poets, what would not I have made of thee, had I but found thee living!'

Ad Maronis mausoleum
Ductus, fudit super eum
    Piae rorem lacrimae:
"Quem te" inquit "reddidissem,
Si te vivum invenissem,
    Poetarum maxime!"

I can imagine Virgil himself, in the year 1616, when he welcomed Shakespeare to the Elysian fields, I can imagine Virgil weeping and saying,

"Quem te reddidissem,
Si te vivum invenissem,
Poetarum maxime!"

Virgil and the Greeks would have made Shakespeare not merely a great genius, which he was already, but, like Milton, a great artist, which he is not. He would have gained from the classics that virtue in which he and all his contemporaries are so wofully deficient, sobriety. He would have learnt to discriminate between what is permanently attractive and what is merely fashionable or popular. And perhaps it is not too much to hope that with the example of the classics before him he would have developed a literary conscience and taken a pride in doing his best, instead of scamping his work because he knew his audience would never find out how ill he was writing. But it was not to be; and there is only too much justice in the exclamation of that eminent Shakespearian critic King George III, 'Was there ever such

stuff as great part of Shakespeare?' Shakespeare, who at his best is the best of all poets, at his worst is almost the worst. I take a specimen not from any youthful performance but from one of his maturest works, a play which contains perhaps the most beautiful poetry that Shakespeare ever wrote, The Winter's Tale. He desires to say that a lady shed tears; and thus he says it: 'Her eyes became two spouts.' That was the sort of atrocity the Elizabethan audience liked, and Shakespeare gave it them to their hearts' content: sometimes, no doubt, with the full knowledge that it was detestable; sometimes, I greatly fear, in good faith, because he had no worthy model to guide him.

The classics, I say, must have done for Shakespeare what they did for Milton; but what proportion of mankind are even accessible to this influence? What proportion offer even a foothold for the entrance of literary culture into their minds? The classics can indeed quicken our appreciation of what is excellent; but can they implant it? They can refine our discrimination between good and bad; but can they create it? Take the greatest scholar that England or perhaps that Europe ever bred; a man so great that in his own province he serves for a touchstone of merit and has always been admired by all admirable scholars and despised by all despicable scholars: Richard Bentley. Bentley was born in the year 1662, and he brought with him into the world, like most men born near that date, a prosaic mind; not did all his immense study of the classics avail to confer on him a true appreciation of poetry. While he dealt with the classical poets he was comparatively safe, for in dealing with these a prosaic mind is not so grave a disqualification as a dithyrambic mind; and Bentley had lived with the ancients till he understood them as no one will ever understand them who brings to their study a taste formed on the poetry of Elizabeth's time or ours. But that jealous deity which loves, Herodotus tells us, to strike down towering things, put it into his heart to invade a literature with which he was ill acquainted, and to edit Paradise Lost. He persuaded himself that Milton in his blindness had become the victim of an unscrupulous person, who had introduced into the poem a great deal that Milton never wrote, and had altered for the worse a great deal that he did write. Accordingly, whenever Milton's poetry failed

to come up to Bentley's prosaic notions of what poetry ought to be, he detected the hand, or, as he preferred to call it, the fist, of this first editor. Milton relates how 'four speedy Cherubim' were sent out with trumpets to summon an assembly. 'Four speedy Cherubim' says Bentley: 'Not much need of swiftness to be a good trumpeter. For speedy I suspect the poet gave "Four sturdy Cherubim." Stout, robust, able to blow a strong blast.' Milton relates how Uriel at sunset came to Paradise to warn the guards of the approach of Satan: 'Thither came Uriel, gliding through the even.' Bentley insists on altering even to heaven, because, as he acutely observes, evening is a division of time, not space, and consequently you cannot come gliding through it: you might as well say, he exclaims, 'came gliding through six o'clock.' Milton relates how Ithuriel found Satan disguised as a toad whispering at the ear of Eve: 'Him, thus intent, Ithuriel with his spear Touched lightly.' But Bentley cannot be happy without Ithuriel's motive for doing so, and accordingly inserts a verse of his own composition: 'Him, thus intent, Ithuriel with his spear, Knowing no real toad durst there intrude, Touched lightly.' Here was a man of true and even colossal genius, yet you see in matters poetical the profoundest knowledge of the classics profited him nothing, because he had been born without the organs by which poetical excellence is achieved. And so are most men born without them; and the quickening and refining influences special to literature run off them like water off a duck's back. It is the magnet and the churn in the song: 'If I can wheedle a knife or a needle, Why not a silver churn?' quoth the magnet; but he found his mistake; and where literature is the magnet most men are silver churns. It is nothing to be ashamed of, though on the other hand it is not much to be conceited about, as some people seem to think it. Different men have different aptitudes, and this aptitude happens to be uncommon; and the majority, not only of other men, but the majority also of professed students of the classics, whatever else they may get from those studies, do not get from them a just appreciation of literary excellence. True, we are not all so easily found out as Bentley, because we have not Bentley's intrepid candour. There is a sort of savage nobility about his firm reliance on his own bad taste: we on the other hand usually fit our judgments not to the

truth of things nor even to our own impressions of things, true or false, but to the standard of convention. There are exceptions, but in general, if a man wants really penetrating judgments, really illuminating criticism on a classical author, he is ill advised if he goes to a classical scholar to get them. Again: You might perhaps expect that those whose chief occupation is the study of the greatest masters of style would insensibly acquire a good style of their own. It is not so: there are again exceptions, but as a rule the literary faculty of classical scholars is poor, and sometimes worse. A distinguished teacher of the classics, who now holds one of the most august positions in these realms, had occasion to give his reason for disapproving something or other, and he gave it in these words: 'It aggravates a tendency to let the thing slide.' We do not all of us write so ill as this, but we mostly write a style which is seldom graceful and not always grammatical: probably no class of students write English much worse. And as among the blind the one-eyed man is king, so the possessors of a very humble skill and grace in writing find themselves highly extolled if it is on classical themes that they write, because these merits are so unexpected, the standard is so low.

And while on the one hand no amount of classical learning can create a true appreciation of literature in those who lack the organs of appreciation, so on the other hand no great amount of classical learning is needed to quicken and refine the taste and judgment of those who do possess such organs. Who are the great critics of the classical literatures, the critics with real insight into the classical spirit, the critics who teach with authority and not as the scribes? They are such men as Lessing or Goethe or Matthew Arnold, scholars no doubt, but not scholars of minute or profound learning. Matthew Arnold went to his grave under the impression that the proper way to spell lacrima was to spell it with a y, and that the words andros paidophonoio poti stoma kheir' oregesthai meant 'to carry to my lips the hand of him that slew my son.' We pedants know better: we spell lacrima with an i, and we know that the verse of Homer really means 'to reach forth my hand to the chin of him that slew my son.' But when it comes to literary criticism, heap up in one scale all the literary criticism that the whole nation of professed scholars ever wrote, and drop into the other the

thin green volume of Matthew Arnold's Lectures on Translating Homer, which has long been out of print because the British public does not care to read it, and the first scale, as Milton says, will straight fly up and kick the beam.

It appears then that upon the majority of mankind the classics can hardly be said to exert the transforming influence which is claimed for them. The special effect of a classical education on the majority of those who receive it, is not to transform and beautify their inner nature, but rather to confer a certain amount of polish on their surface, by teaching them things that one is expected to know and enabling them to understand the meaning of English words and use them properly. If a man has learnt Greek and Latin and has to describe the blowing up of a powder mill, he will not describe it as a cataclysm; if he is irritated he will say so, and will not say that he is aggravated; if the conversation turns on the Muse who is supposed to preside over dancing, he will call her Terpsíchore, and not Térpsitshoar. We shall probably therefore think it advisable to acquire a tincture of Classics, for ornament, just as we shall think it advisable to acquire a modicum of Science, for use. There, in both cases, we shall most of us stop; because to pursue the classics further in the expectation of transforming and beautifying our inner natures is, for most of us, to ask from those studies what they cannot give; and because, if practical utility be our aim in studying Science, a very modest amount of Science will serve our turn.

So we find that the two fancied aims of learning laid down by these two parties will not stand the test of examination. And no wonder; for these are the fabrications of men anxious to impose their own favourite pursuits on others, or of men who are ill at ease in their conscience until they have invented some external justification for those pursuits. The acquisition of knowledge needs no such justification: its true sanction is a much simpler affair, and inherent in itself. People are too prone to torment themselves with devising far-fetched reasons: they cannot be content with the simple truth asserted by Aristotle: 'all men possess by nature a craving for knowledge', pantes anthropoi tou eidenai oregontai phusei. This is no rare endowment scattered sparingly from heaven that falls on a few heads and passes others

by: curiosity, the desire to know things as they are, is a craving no less native to the being of man, no less universal in diffusion through mankind, than the craving for food and drink. And do you suppose that such a desire means nothing? The very definition of the good, says Aristotle again, is that which all desire. Whatever is pleasant is good, unless it can be shewn that in the long run it is harmful, or, in other words, not pleasant but unpleasant. Mr Spencer himself on another subject speaks thus: 'So profound an ignorance is there of the laws of life, that men do not even know that their sensations are their natural guides, and (when not rendered morbid by long continued disobedience) their trustworthy guides.' The desire of knowledge does not need, nor could it possibly possess, any higher or more authentic sanction that the happiness which attends its gratification.

Perhaps it will be objected that we see, every day of our lives, plenty of people who exhibit no pleasure in learning and experience no desire to know; people, as Plato agreeably puts it, who wallow in ignorance with the complacency of a brutal hog. We do; and here is the reason. If the cravings of hunger and of thirst are denied satisfaction, if a man is kept from food and drink, the man starves to death, and there is an end of him. This is a result which arrests the attention of even the least observant mind; so it is generally recognised that hunger and thirst cannot be neglected with impunity, that a man ought to eat and drink. But if the craving for knowledge is denied satisfaction, the result which follows is not so striking to the eye. The man, worse luck, does not starve to death. He still preserves the aspect and motions of a living human being; so people think that the hunger and thirst for knowledge can be neglected with impunity. And yet, though the man does not die altogether, part of him dies, part of him starves to death: as Plato says, he never attains completeness and health, but walks lame to the end of his life and returns imperfect and good for nothing to the world below.

But the desire of knowledge, stifle it though you may, is none the less originally born with every man; and nature does not implant desires for nothing, nor endow us with faculties in vain. 'Sure,' says Hamlet,

> Sure, He that made us with such large discourse,
> Looking before and after, gave us not
> That capability and godlike reason
> To fust in us unused.

The faculty of learning is ours that we may find in its exercise that delight which arises from the unimpeded activity of any energy in the groove nature meant it to run in. Let a man acquire knowledge not for this or that external and incidental good which may chance to result from it, but for itself; not because it is useful or ornamental, but because it is knowledge, and therefore good for man to acquire. 'Brothers,' says Ulysses in Dante, when with his old and tardy companions he had left Seville on the right hand and Ceuta on the other, and was come to that narrow pass where Hercules assigned his landmarks to hinder man from venturing farther: 'Brothers, who through a hundred thousand dangers have reached the West, deny not, to this brief vigil of your senses that remains, experience of the unpeopled world behind the sunset. Consider of what seed ye are sprung: ye were not formed to live like brutes, but to follow virtue and knowledge.' For knowledge resembles virtue in this, and differs in this from other possessions, that it is not merely a means of procuring good, but is good in itself simply: it is not a coin which we pay down to purchase happiness, but it has happiness indissolubly bound up with it. Fortitude and continence and honesty are not commended to us on the ground that they conduce, as on the whole they do conduce, to material success, nor yet on the ground that they will be rewarded hereafter: those whose office it is to exhort mankind to virtue are ashamed to degrade the cause they plead by proffering such lures as these. And let us too disdain to take lower ground in commending knowledge: let us insist that the pursuit of knowledge, like the pursuit of righteousness, is part of man's duty to himself; and remember the Scripture where it is written 'He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul'.

I will not say, as Prof. Tyndall has somewhere said, that all happiness belongs to him who can say from his heart 'I covet truth'. Entire happiness is not attainable either by this or by any other method. Nay, it may be

urged on the contrary that the pursuit of truth in some directions is even injurious to happiness, because it compels us to take leave of delusions which were pleasant while they lasted. It may be urged that the light shed on the origin and destiny of man by the pursuit of truth in some directions is not altogether a cheerful light. It may be urged that man stands to-day in the position of one who has been reared from his cradle as the child of a noble race and the heir to great possessions, and who finds at his coming of age that he has been deceived alike as to his origin and his expectations; that he neither springs of the high lineage he fancied, nor will inherit the vast estate he looked for, but must put off his towering pride, and contract his boundless hopes, and begin the world anew from a lower level: and this, it may be urged, comes of pursuing knowledge. But even conceding this, I suppose the answer to be that knowledge, and especially disagreeable knowledge, cannot by any art be totally excluded even from those who do not seek it. Wisdom, said Aeschylus long ago, comes to men whether they will or no. The house of delusions is cheap to build, but draughty to live in, and ready at any instant to fall; and it is surely truer prudence to move our furniture betimes into the open air than to stay indoors until our tenement tumbles about our ears. It is and it must in the long run be better for a man to see things as they are than to be ignorant of them; just as there is less fear of stumbling or of striking against corners in the daylight than in the dark.

Nor again will I pretend that, as Bacon asserts, 'the pleasure and delight of knowledge and learning far surpasseth all other in nature'. This is too much the language of a salesman crying his own wares. The pleasures of the intellect are notoriously less vivid than either the pleasures of sense or the pleasures of the affections; and therefore, especially in the season of youth, the pursuit of knowledge is likely enough to be neglected and lightly esteemed in comparison with other pursuits offering much stronger immediate attractions. But the pleasure of learning and knowing, though not the keenest, is yet the least perishable of pleasures; the least subject to external things, and the play of chance, and the wear of time. And as a prudent man puts money by to serve as a provision for the material wants of his old age, so too he needs to lay up against the end of his days provision

for the intellect. As the years go by, comparative values are found to alter: Time, says Sophocles, takes many things which once were pleasures and brings them nearer to pain. In the day when the strong men shall bow themselves, and desire shall fail, it will be a matter of yet more concern than now, whether one can say 'my mind to me a kingdom is'; and whether the windows of the soul look out upon a broad and delightful landscape, or face nothing but a brick wall.

Well then, once we have recognised that knowledge in itself is good for man, we shall need to invent no pretexts for studying this subject or that; we shall import no extraneous considerations of use or ornament to justify us in learning one thing rather than another. If a certain department of knowledge specially attracts a man, let him study that, and study it because it attracts him; and let him not fabricate excuses for that which requires no excuse, but rest assured that the reason why it most attracts him is that it is best for him. The majority of mankind, as is only natural, will be most attracted by those sciences which most nearly concern human life; those sciences which, in Bacon's phrase, are drenched in flesh and blood, or, in the more elegant language of the Daily Telegraph, palpitate with actuality. The men who are attracted to the drier and the less palpitating sciences, say logic or pure mathematics or textual criticism, are likely to be fewer in number; but they are not to suppose that the comparative unpopularity of such learning renders it any the less worthy of pursuit. Nay, they may if they like console themselves with Bacon's observation that 'this same lumen siccum doth parch and offend most men's watery and soft natures' and infer, if it pleases them, that their natures are less soft and watery than other men's. But be that as it may, we can all dwell together in unity without crying up our own pursuits or depreciating the pursuits of others on factitious grounds. We are not like the Ottoman sultans of old time, who thought they could never enjoy a moment's security till they had murdered all their brothers. There is no rivalry between the studies of Arts and Laws and Science but the rivalry of fellow soldiers in striving which can most victoriously achieve the common end of all, to set back the frontier of darkness.

It is the glory of God, says Solomon, to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter. Kings have long since abdicated that province; and we students are come into their inheritance: it is our honour to search out the things which God has concealed. In Germany at Easter time they hide coloured eggs about the house and the garden that the children may amuse themselves in hunting after them and finding them. It is to some such game of hide-and-seek that we are invited by that power which planted in us the desire to find out what is concealed, and stored the universe with hidden things that we might delight ourselves in discovering them. And the pleasure of discovery differs from other pleasures in this, that is shadowed by no fear of satiety on the one hand or of frustration on the other. Other desires perish in their gratification, but the desire of knowledge never: the eye is not satisfied with seeing nor the ear filled with hearing. Other desires become the occasion of pain through dearth of the material to gratify them, but not the desire of knowledge: the sum of things to be known is inexhaustible, and however long we read we shall never come to the end of our story-book. So long as the mind of man is what it is, it will continue to exult in advancing on the unknown throughout the infinite field of the universe; and the tree of knowledge will remain for ever, as it was in the beginning, a tree to be desired to make one wise.