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THE  
**INDICATOR**

A  
Miscellany of Self Improvement,

DEVOTED TO

THE DISCUSSION OF PRINCIPLES

THAT PROMOTE

THE ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE; THE CULTURE AND  
DISCIPLINE OF THE MIND; THE FORMATION  
OF CHARACTER,

AND THE

PROPER CONDUCT OF LIFE.

“Every man is the architect of his own fortune.”—BACON.

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 *Left for examination; to be called for to-morrow. For an exposition of its plan and character, see Prospectus, which follows.*

## PROSPECTUS.

THE design of this publication is to furnish a manual of self-improvement, in which all the great principles of self-culture, shall be distinctly presented; its necessity enforced, and pursuit encouraged. It will especially aim to be of service to those who are anxious to repair in the intervals of a business vocation, the consequences of past neglect. It will treat of the best methods of fixing the attention, and of strengthening the memory; of arousing the mind to acts of reflection, and of training it to habits of observation; of reading to profit and of writing with force and elegance; of thinking to effect, and of speaking with propriety; of conversing with elegance, and of conducting habitually with discretion and good sense. It will aim to exhibit the principles upon which the powers of the imagination are unfolded, and the habits of moral duty strengthened, and made permanent. In short we hope, ultimately, to comprise within its pages a perfect system of self-instruction, applicable to every art by which the physical, social, and moral powers of man, are evoked and strengthened.

There is an education apart from the discipline of the schools. It comprises all those exercises and series of means, which contribute to the formation of character, and the proper conduct of life. It is founded in self-knowledge, and is sustained and carried on, under

the inspiration derived from the love of excellence. "Every man," says Bacon, "is the architect of his own fortune." He is so, emphatically, of his own character. This is a task that cannot be done by proxy. It must be effected through the sustained energy of our own activity, or it cannot be done at all.

These views will form the pervading spirit of our publication, and we shall aim at all times, and upon all occasions, to instil into the minds of our readers, a holy confidence in, and a just respect for themselves, a perfect faith in the power of effort, and a hearty self-reliance in their own destiny and capacity.

Every one who has had much experience can recall periods, when perhaps a solitary suggestion or important precept, would have found a ready hearing, and possibly changed the whole tenor of his character and course in life. This consideration inspires us to believe, that our labors may not be unfruitful to youth of all classes and conditions, and induces us to venture the suggestion that parents who may look with a favorable eye on our undertaking will see their advantage in adding the Indicator to their list of family journals. A didactic work, appearing periodically, possesses, perhaps, many advantages in arresting the versatile attention, and vagrant humor of undisciplined minds.

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☞ See 3d page.

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THE  
**INDICATOR:**

MISCELLANY OF SELF-IMPROVEMENT.

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Vol. I.

No. 2.

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I. SELF-RELIANCE AND SELF-DISTRUST.

BY JOHN NEAL.

1. Look about you, my friends, whatever may be your age or experience; stand up, and look about you on every side, while the great multitude go hurrying by you in a cloud of dust; fix your eye upon their acknowledged leaders: call to mind every distinguished man you know, whatever may be his condition, business or history; every great man you ever heard of, whether among men of business, painters or poets, mechanics or lawyers, soldiers or statesmen, sculptors or architects, ministers of the gospel or merchant princes, and you will find, however they may disagree in everything else, that in one thing they are all alike, and all of a family. You will always find them remarkable for a generous confidence in themselves—in other words, for a hearty *self-reliance*.

2. And again. If you will but betake yourself to your room, and call up before you all those of your acquaintance, who are most remarkable for inefficiency and helplessness; all those, who, notwithstanding their many virtues, are a burthen to themselves and to everybody else; all whom everybody pities and nobody helps—all whom it is in vain to help, my life on it, whatever may be their business-talent, their genius, their virtue, their resources, or their connexions, they are all, to a man, affected with a disqualifying *self-distrust*. It is in vain that they lift up their voices, and try to stand erect; to be as other men are, who prosper in the great business of life, decided, prompt and vigorous, unwavering and resolute. It is in vain that, urged on every side by the obligations of society—

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and unlike in the Greek language alone, than by spending ten years in overloading their memory with a mass of crude facts, into the chaos of which the untutored intellect cannot penetrate. And, if one's profession is to be that of a scholar, he will not be the longer in getting to the end of his journey, because he has spent more time than some of his fellow-travellers in making himself thoroughly acquainted with the route.

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#### IV.—GREAT LABOR ESSENTIAL TO GREAT ACQUIREMENTS OR ACHIEVEMENTS.

BY REV. WM. B. SPRAGUE, D. D.

1. No man ever makes great *moral* attainments without a corresponding degree of labor. There may indeed be great physical courage, and much of good-nature and even generosity, without any effort whatever; because these great qualities belong to many a man's original constitution, and to exercise them is not to resist a current, but to fall in with it. But when I speak of moral attainments, I refer especially to the power of self-control, and to its exercise in accordance with the great principles of reason and righteousness;—to the reduction of the various passions to their proper places, and the keeping of all our moral powers ready for healthful and vigorous action. And this I venture to say, is what no man ever gained without diligent and untiring efforts. Such a character, for instance, as that of Washington, could have been the result of nothing but the most patient and vigorous self-discipline. Washington, if history has given a fair report, while he was great in all the elements of his nature, was a man of like passions with those who have the strongest: and if he had grown up under the mastery of those passions, and they had been suffered always to tyrannize over him, how much would it have abated our admiration of him, even as a conqueror, that he had enemies in his own bosom that were stronger than he! But it was with his foes within that he began to fight first; and the victory which he gained over them was the preparation for other victories;—the great secret of his success and of his glory. He had indeed great physical courage, which was born with him, but he had also a moral courage that imparted to his character a yet brighter attraction, of which he was to a great extent himself the author. He was cool and thoughtful in the time of danger. He ventured on no rash experiments. He loved his country better than his life. The shocks of adversity never disheartened him, and the furnace of prosperity singed not a hair of his head. He was the patron of all that was good and useful. He was generous to his race,—great in everything; so that

even the nation which he vanquished have erected monuments to his glory. But I repeat, that character, even with the material which the God of nature originally supplied, could have been the result of no superficial effort : it was a silent, but yet a laborious process, by which it rose and towered into such unparalleled magnificence. And what was true of Washington has been true of every other great man : he has been long active in moulding the elements of his own moral nature.

2. And surely it is no wonder that men must struggle hard for great moral attainment, when we consider the circumstances in which they are to be made. Account for the fact as you may, there is a moral disorder that has seized upon human nature ; the effect of which is, that while the conscience points out one way, the passions often draw with tremendous power the other ; and there is always reason to fear that the passions will get the better in every conflict. In addition to this, the atmosphere that we breathe is full of noxious ingredients : the theatre in which we move is a mere show-box of temptations ; and there are influences without co-operations with the influences within, to impart to us a mean, or sensual, or grovelling character. Is it not obvious, then, that the man who will become morally great, who will rise far towards the perfection of his nature in such adverse circumstances, must make up his mind to labor for it ? Is it not a self-evident truth, that no indolent man can be truly great—not great even in goodness ?

3. If nothing great is accomplished without labor, then every one should be particular in respect to the object toward which his labor is directed ; for labor is too valuable to be thrown away on unimportant objects. There are those indeed who are industrious in doing positive and acknowledged evil ; who task their powers, and noble powers too, to the utmost, in endeavoring to poison the fountains of moral influence, and carry a blight to every rising plant of virtue. But there is another class who exhaust their efforts upon objects of an indifferent character ; who are always busy, without being busy to any important purpose ; and the only chasm which their removal from the world occasions, is to be found in the empty space which their bodies had been accustomed to fill. Let no man, then, think it enough that he is active, unless his activity is directed in a suitable channel. If you will act with the greatest wisdom, you will endeavor to compass the double object of cultivating and exalting your own intellectual and moral nature, and rendering the best service to your generation and to posterity. This is an object that will abundantly reward your labors, both in this world and in the next. But the idea of living merely to amuse your fellow-men, is utterly unworthy of a rational creature. There are multitudes who spend their whole lives in writing books merely for amusement ; and their whole object is gained in provoking a vulgar laugh. But I would respect a man just about as much, who should sit at the

corners of the streets from morning till night to amuse the passers-by with many songs. Man was made for a noble service; and he degrades his nature by wasting his energies upon nothing.

4. If nothing great is accomplished without labor, then every mind should be trained to labor, from the earliest development of its faculties. It is a serious defect in the matter of education, as it is generally conducted, that the training of the mind to a habit of activity is not commenced early enough; and that not unfrequently there is an adverse habit formed during the years of childhood and youth, which, in after life, is never effectually overcome. I would say, let every young man, especially, under a high sense of his obligation to answer the great purpose of his existence, resist every temptation to indolence, and look for happiness only in a course of vigorous and well directed activity. Let there be a delightful association formed in his mind with labor—steady and persevering labor. Let him avail himself of all the rational helps which are within his reach, to aid in the culture of his powers, and in the prosecution of all the great and good ends to which he is devoted. I say again, you cannot sufficiently realize the importance of forming this habit early. Indolence in youth is the harbinger of a career marked by ignorance and uselessness, not to say folly and crime. Diligence in youth directed to worthy and important ends, is the pledge of a useful life, a dignified character and honored graves.

5. There is a large class of young men, who are engaged in some laborious worldly occupation, upon whom that part of the original curse is literally visited, by which man was doomed to get his bread by the sweat of his brow: and it too often happens, that young men of this description resign themselves to an inexcusable degree of ignorance, from an erroneous impression that their condition in life forbids the extensive culture of their intellectual powers. But in this they offend against their high destiny as rational and immortal beings. Be it so that they must labor with their hands; yet, sometimes surely, this kind of labor must be intermitted, and then let the claims of the mind be recognized and met. Some part of every day should be sacred even with the mechanic and the farmer, to high purposes of intellectual improvement; and this, I have no doubt, would always be found practicable in the adoption of systematic arrangement and rigid economy. More than this,—when the mind has once been trained to a habit of reflection, it will be found that the head and the hands can be put in requisition at the same time; and that while the artizan is turning his wheel or blowing his bellows, he can also be framing an argument or solving a problem. And there are many cases in which intellectual and manual labor may go hand in hand: and this is especially true in mechanics; when the principle which the mind revolves, and the work which the hands perform, mutually illustrate and adjust each other. We need cultivated men in every department of life;—cultivated farmers and

artizans, as well as lawyers, physicians and ministers; but it not unfrequently happens that an ardent thirst for knowledge, even when combined with the humblest occupation, gradually elevates the individual to higher and yet higher employments, till he who had passed his childhood in learning to make shoes or set types, occupies before he comes to his grave, some of the highest stations of dignity and influence. What an example of the effect of early and persevering labors was Lemuel Haynes! though he came into the world with the disadvantage of having a dark skin, and at a period too when a dark skin had much fewer attractions than it now has; yet so inextinguishable was his desire for knowledge, that he *would* gain it though he had no better light than the light of a kitchen fire; and that man's labor had its reward; for he rose to respectability and usefulness, and he edified us by his conversation and his preaching; and even as an intellectual man, he has left a name that is fragrant throughout the community. Let no young man, then, find an apology, even in the most adverse circumstances, for neglecting the culture of his mind; for there are no obstacles which will not disappear before a vigorous and persevering application.

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## V. ON THE EDUCATION OF A MAN OF BUSINESS.

BY A RECENT ENGLISH WRITER.

“The wisdom touching negotiation or business hath not been hitherto collected into writing, to the great derozation of learning, and the professors of learning. For from this root springeth chiefly that note or opinion, which by us is expressed in adage to this effect, ‘that there is no great concurrence between learning and wisdom.’ For of the three wisdoms which we have set down to pertain to civil life, for wisdom of behavior, it is by learned men for the most part despised as an inferior to virtue, and an enemy to meditation; for wisdom of government, they acquit themselves well when they are called to it, but that happeneth to few; but for the wisdom of business, wherein man's life is conversant, there be no books of it, except some few scattered advertisements, that have no proportion to the magnitude of this subject. For if books were written of this, as the other, I doubt not but learned men with mean experience would far excel men of long experience without learning, and outshoot them in their own bow.”—*Bacon's Advancement of Learning*

1. THE essential qualities for a man of business are of a moral nature: these are to be cultivated first. He must learn betimes to love truth. That same love of truth will be found a potent charm to bear him safely through the world's entanglements—I mean safely in the most worldly sense. Besides, the love of truth not only makes a man act with more simplicity, and therefore with less chance of error; but it conduces to the highest intellectual development. The following passage in “*The Statesman*” gives the reason. “The correspondencies of wisdom and goodness are manifold; and that they will