Hanah More Diary, c. 1800. WM SCRC. Mss. Acc. 2011.087
Swem Description: Journal, circa 1800s, of Hanah More. It is entitled "The Practical Use of Female Knowledge with Sketch of the Female Character and a Comparative View of Seses (i.e. Sexes)." It describes how the learning of women is shown through their conduct, not through their literary endeavors.

Sunday Writing
Hanah More: The practical use of Female Knowledge, with a sketch of the female character, and a comparative view of seses

The cheif [sic] end to be proposed in cultivating the understanding of women, is to qualify them for the practical uses of life – Their knowledge is not often like the learning of men, to be reproduced in some literary composition, nor ever in any learned profession; but it is to come out in conduct. it is to be eschibeted in life and manners. A Lady studies, not that she may qualify herself to become and orator or a pleader; not that she may learn to debate, but to act. she is to read the best book, not so much to enable her to talk of them, as to bring the improvement which they furnish, to rectification of her principals and the formation of her habits. The great uses of Study to a woman are to enable her to regulate her own mind, and to be instrumental to the good of others –

To woman, therefore, whatever be her [reason?], I would recommend a predominance of those more sober studies, which, not having display for their object, may make her wise without vanity, happy without witnesses, and content without Panogyrists; the exercise of which will not bring celebrity but improve usefulness. She should pursue every kind of study so which will teach her to elicitt truth; which will lead her to be intent upon realities; will give precission [2] to her ideas; will make an exact mind.

She should cultivate every study, which, instead of stimulating sensibility, will chastise it; which will neither create an excessive or a false refinement; which will give her diffinitive notions; will bring the imagination under dominion; will lead her o think, to compare, to combine, to methodise, which will confer such a power of discriminatives, that her judgement shall learn to reject what is dazzling if it be not solid; and to prefer. Not what is striking, or bright, or new, but what is just. That kind of knowledge which is rather fited for home consumption than foreign escportations, is peculiarly adapted to woman.—

It is because the superficial nature of their education, furnishes them with a false and low standard of intellectual excellence, that woman have tow often become ridiculous by the unfounded pretensions of literary vanity: for it is not the really learned, but the smatterers, who have generally brought their sesc into discredit, by an absurd affectation, which has set them on despising the duties of ordinary life – [Hera?] have not been wanting (but the character is not now common) [precious?] ridicules, who assuming a superiority to the sober cares which ought to occupy their sesc, have claimed a lofty and supercilious escemption from the dull and plodding drudgeries of this dim speck called earth

There have not been wanting ill judgeing females, who have effected to establish an ununnatural separation between talents and usefulness, instead of [3] of bearing in mind that talents are the great appointed instrument of usefulness; who have acted as if knowledge were to confer on woman a kind of fantastic sovereignty, which should esconerate her from the discharge of female duties; whereas it is only meant the more eminently to qualify her for the performance of them. A woman of real sense will never forget, that wile the greater [Jourt?] of her proper duties are such as the most moderately gifted may fulfil with credit, (since providence never makes that
to be very difficult, which is generally necessary,) yet that the most highly endowed are equally bound to fulfil them; and let her remember that the humblest of these offices, performed on Christian principals, are whole some for the minds even of the most enlightened, as the tend to the casting down of those “high imaginations” which women of genius are too much tempted to indulge.

For instance; ladies whose natural vanity has been aggravated by a false education, may look down oeconomy as a vulgar attainment, unworthy of the attention of an highly cultivated intellect; but this is the false estimate of a shallow mind. A conantry, such as a woman of fashion is called on to practise is not merely the petty detail of small daily escpenses, the shably curtailments and stinted parsimony of a little mind, operating on little concerns, but it is the escercise of a sound judgement exerted in the comprehensive outline of order, of arrangement, of distribution; of regulations by which alone will governed society, great and small, subsist. She who has the best regulated mind will other things being equal, have the best regulated family.

[4] As in the superintendance of the universe, wisdom is seen in its effects; and as in the visible works of providence that which goes on with such beautiful regularity is the result not of chance but of design; so that management which seems the most easy is commonly the consequence of the best concerted plan: and a well concerted plan is seldom the ospring of an ordinary mind – A sound oeconomy is a sound understanding brought into action; it is calculation realized; it is the doctrine of proportion reduced to practice; it is [fondecing?] consequence, and garding against them; it is especting contingenses and being prepared for them. The difference is, that to a narrow minded vulgar oecomist the details are continually present; she is overwhelmed by their weight, and is perpetually bespeaking your pitty for her labours and your praise for her escucutions; She is afraid your will not see how much she is harassed. She is not satisfied that the machine moves harmoniously, unless she is perpetually escposing every secret spring to observation.

Little events and trivial operations engross her whole soul, which a woman of sense, having provided for their probable recurrence, guards against the inconveniences, without being disconcerted by the casual abstractions which they offer to her general scheme. Subordinate escpenses and inconsiderable retrenchments should not swallow up that attention which is better bestowed on regulating the general scale of espense, connecting and reducing an overgrown establishment, and reforming radical and growing escpenses. Superior talents, however, are not so common, as, by their frequency, to offer much disturbance to the [5] general course of human affairs; and nary a lady, who tacitly accuses herself of neglecting her ordinary duties because she is a genius, will perhaps be found often to accuse herself as unjustly as good St. Jerome, when he laments that he was beaten by the angel for being too Ciceronian in his style.

The truth is women who are so puffed up with the conceit of talents as to neglect the plain duties of life, will not frequently be found to be women of the best abilities. And here may the author be allowed the gratification of observing, that those women of real genius and extensive knowledge, whose friendship has conferred honour and happiness on her own life, have been, in general, [esciment?] for oeconomy and the practice of domestic virtues; neglecting the duties of dispersing the knowledge of common life, with which literary women have been frequently, and not always unjustly, accused.

A [monastic?] girl with a pretension to sentiment, which her still more ignorant friends mistake for genius, (for in the empire of the blind the one eyed are kings,) and possessing something of a natural ear, has perhaps in her childhood escausted all the images of greif, and
love, and fancy, picked up in her desultory poetical reading, in an elegy on a sick linnet, or a sonnet on a dead lap dog; she begins there forward to be considered as a prodigy in her little circle; surrounded by fond and flattering friends, every [avenue?] of truth is shut out; she [sieses?] opportunity of learning that her fame is derived not from her [6] powers, but her position; and that when an impartial critic shall have made all the necessary deductions. Such as – that she is a neighbour, that she is a relation, that she is a female, that she is young, that she has had no advantages, that she is pretty perhaps – When her verses come to e stripped of all their esoteric appendages, and the fair author is [drince?e?] of her ‘cantage ground of partiality, ses, and favour she will commonly [seside?] to the level of ordinary capacities. While those more quiet women, who have meekly sat down in the humble shades of prose and poetry prudence, by a patient perseverance in rational studies, rise afterwards much higher in the scale of intellect, and acquires a much larger stock of [sour?] knowledge for far better purposes than mere display. And, though it may seem a contradiction, yet it will generally be found true, that girls who take to [sensible?] are the least studious, the least reflecting, and the least rational --- They early acquire a false confidence in their own unassisted powers; it becomes more gratifying to their natural vanity to be always pouring out their minds on paper, than to be drawing into them fresh ideas from richer [sources?] The original stock, small perhaps at first, is soon spent. The subsequent efforts grow more and more feeble, if the mind which is continually escuasting itself, be not also continually replenished, till the later compositions become little more than reproductions of the same ideas, and [facistor?] copies of the same images, as if little [recanied?] and no [dified?] perhaps, and not a little diluted and [7] enfeebled.

It will be necessary to combat vigilantly that favorite plea of lively ignorance, that study is an enemy to originality. Connect the vanity judgement, while you humble the vanity of the young [unthougt?] pretender, by convincing her that those half formed thoughts, her invention, prove only that she wants taste and knowledge. That while conversation must polish and enlarge them by the accession of various kinds of virtuous and elegant literature; and that the cultivated mind will repay with large interest the seed sown in it by judicious study. Let it be observed, I am by no means encouraging young ladies to turn authors; I am only reminding them, that authors

“That authors before they write should read;”
I am only putting them in mind that to be ignorant is not the be original -- --

Those self taught, and self dependent scribblers J, and for the unmerited and unattainable praise of fancy and of genius, while they disdain the commendation of judgement, knowledge, and perseverance which would probably be within their reach. To escort admiration they are accustomed to boast of an impossible [majidity?] in composing; and while they [inseniate?] how little there their performance cost them, they intend you should infer how perfect they might have made them had they [?] to the drudgery of application: but apprec[? Damaged corner?] with them implies defect of genius. They take [? Damaged corner] [8] superfluous pains to convince you that there was neither learning nor labour employed in the work for which they solicit your praise. Alas! the judicious eye of too soon perceiving it! although it does not perceive that native thought and mother wit, which in works of real genius makes some amends for the negligence, which yet they do not justify.--- But instead of estolling these effusions for their facility, it would be kind in friends rather to blame them for their crudeness: and when the young candidates for fame are eager to prove in how short a time such a powem has been struck off, it would be well to regret they had not either to him a longer time, or refrained from writing at all; as in the former case the work would have been less defective, and in the latter the writer would
have discovered more humility and self distrust.

A general capacity for knowledge, and the cultivation of the understanding at large, will always put a woman into the best state for directing her pursuits into those particular channels which her destination in life may afterwards require. But she should be carefully instructed that her talents are only a means to a still higher attainment, and that she is not to rest in them as an end; that merely to escercise them as instruments for the acquisition of fame and the promotion of pleasure, is subversive of her delicacy as a woman, and contrary to the spirit of a christian.

Study, therefore, is to be considered as the means of strength [? Damaged corner] the mind, and of fitting it for higher duties, just [9] as escercise is to be considered an instrument for strengthening the body for the same purpose. And the valetudinarian who is religiously punctual in the observance of daily rides to promote his health, and rests that as an end, without so much as intruding to make in his improved health an instrument of increased [resefulness?], acts on the same low and selfish principal with her who reads merely for pleasure and for fame, without any design of divesting the more enlarged and invigorated mind to the glory of the giver.

But there is our human consideration which would perhaps more effectually tend to damp in an aspiring woman the ardours of literary vanity (I speak not of real genius, though there there the remarks often applies) than any which she will derive from motives of humility, or propensity, or religion, which is, that in the judgement passed on her performances, she will have to encounter the mortifying circumstances of having her sesc always taken into account, and her highest assertions will probably be deceived with the qualified approbation, that it is really estraordinary for a woman. Men of learning, who are naturally inclined to estimate his works in proportion as they

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