

42.  
The exact,  
the histori-  
cal, and the  
critical  
habits of  
thought.

and the limit of their usefulness. These three directions of thought mark three tolerably distinct attitudes of the human mind. Skill in inventing and in applying new and precise methods—the exact habit or attitude of thought; love of detail, and the desire for complete and exhaustive knowledge—the historical habit or attitude of thought; lastly, the desire to become fully alive to the value of existing methods or principles, which implies a consciousness of the limited nature of one and every principle—the critical habit or attitude of thought. The progress of mathematics and natural science depends primarily on the first; classical studies depend on the second; philosophical reasoning mainly on the last. Each of the three nations which have led human progress and thought during the past centuries has probably been possessed of these three cardinal virtues in equal proportions. For though Newton stands pre-eminent in the first, we have Laplace and Gauss and their numerous followers in other countries; though the great volume of classical learning and criticism has emanated from the schools of Wolf, Hermann, and Böckh, they themselves point back to Bentley and Joseph Scaliger; and even Kant's unrivalled enterprise was prepared by Hume, and dates back to Descartes. There need, therefore, be no angry rivalry or carping jealousy. We may point to the remarkably equal contributions of the three nations to the general progress of thought. But a very different and truly legitimate interest prompts us to note how in the great performances of each nation, in the literature of each of the three languages, different factors have been at work—different