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Dear Colleague:

I find the following story so charming that I would like to repeat it. One July day in 1667, Samuel Pepys and his friends went for a stroll up the Epsom Downs where they encountered a shepherd and his little boy. The boy was reading the Bible to him. "So I made the boy read to me," says Pepys, "which he did with the forced tone that children usually read, that was mighty pretty." Pepys and his friends complimented the father, whose chest swelled in pride and who "blessed God" for his little boy.

A century later, a water boy rowed Dr. Johnson and Boswell down the Thames to Greenwich. The friends were discussing the shaping influence of classical culture. Boswell thought people didn't need it. Johnson reluctantly agreed. "For instance," he said, "this boy rows us well without learning as if he could sing the song of Orpheus to Argonauts, who were the first sailors." Then he interrupted himself and called to the boy: "What would you give, my lad, to know about the Argonauts?" "Sir," said the boy, "I would give what I have."

Love of learning. The British have done some awful things to their colonies, including the West Indies under their control. They did, however, introduce a rigorous system of education on some of the islands. When the colonies gained independence, they did not jettison the educational baby along with the imperial bath water. The tiny island of St. Lucia boasts 90 per cent literacy rate. Though poor--its per capita income is around \$1,500--it is rich in pride. One reason for the pride--no less than two Nobel laureates! Arthur Lewis, honored for his contribution to economics in 1979 and Derek Walcott who has just been given the prize for literature. Colin Powell, I believe, has a West Indian background. And so does the esteemed writer Jamaica Kincaid, whose roots are in Antigua. Kincaid says: "We had imposed on us this foreign culture which we somehow managed to make our own... We are kind of like oysters, constantly agitated by this, but producing pearls." How productive this attitude is, as distinct from one of resentment and repudiation. Pride to these people of African descent lies in their proven ability, despite the horrors of the past and even (strangely) because of them, to offer intellectual pearls to the world.

Best wishes,

Y. Fu