

more lenient and tender in our judgment of others. It will hardly be denied, I think, that the old and middle-aged are more kindly critics than the young who—often in proportion to the height of their own aspirations—become stern judges of short of their elders as have fallen short of their own young ideal. Nor is such youthful sternness altogether to be condemned. He who in very early life is extremely tolerant of failure in others is apt to be also too tolerant of his own. It is right, I think, for all of us who have high aspirations to be dissatisfied with those who come short of our ideals till we have been taught by our own experience the difficulty there is in realising them.

“If nature put not forth her power
About the opening of the flower,
Who is it that could live an hour?”*

* Tennyson's "Two Voices."

I think it was the German poet Goethe who, on hearing a father complain that his son aimed too high, said, "My friend, do not rebuke your son for his aspirations. If young people are not encouraged to soar, they will too frequently learn to grovel." Moreover, if we did not sometimes attempt that which is beyond our powers, we might never succeed in doing even the little we shall accomplish. No one can become fully cognisant of his own limitations till he has been taught them by the painful discipline of repeated failure. Let us, then, who have arrived at sober middle life, be on our guard how we check the aspirations of the young. Let us rather do our utmost to encourage, to sympathize, to inspire; even though we may also feel it right to add a word of caution or warning in order to protect them from the pitfalls we have not escaped ourselves. And yet, in spite of all our encouragement and sympathy, or of the true admiration we may feel

for their young ideals, it will be difficult, I think, for such of us as are most conscious of our own shortcomings not to be inwardly feeling, as we listen to their outpourings, somewhat as Carlyle when he wrote, in his "Frederick the Great":—

“What will he grow to? Probably to something considerable. Very certainly to something far short of his aspirations, far different from his own hopes and the world's concerning him. It is not We, it is Father Time, that does the controlling and fulfilling of our hopes, and strange work he makes of them and of us.”

Yet it seems to me that it is wiser to teach the young not to shelter themselves too easily beneath the shoulders of "Father Time"; though doubtless, none of us can entirely escape that combined influence of Place and Time, which we call our Environment. Among the many wise sayings of Confucius there is one that I am very fond of: "When the archer misses the center of the target he turns round and seeks for the cause of failure in himself." If we wish to be taught by our mistakes, and to avoid any future repetition of them—which is the truest use to which we can put them—let us beware how we lay the blame of our failures on fate or ill luck. It is to Confucius, too, I think, that we owe the wise injunction. "Help a man round one corner; take heed how you help him round a second." While I have great compassion for a man who commits a mistake, and but little condemnation for him who repeats it once (for some are slower in acquiring experience than others), I confess that I have small hope of him who repeats the same mistake again and again. If he is unable to learn by Consequences he is unable to profit by the greatest teacher Nature has given him; and in nine cases out of ten the reason that he cannot, or will not, do so, is that