THE INVOLUNTARY INFLUENCE OF THE TEACHER OVER HIS SCHOLARS.

DURING a large proportion of his active hours, the pupil is in the presence of one whose social position, strength of character, superior abilities, and momentary discipline, render him an object of the utmost attention and interest. He cannot raise his eye without observing him, and when his eye is not raised, he is, involuntarily, powerfully impressed by his presence and pervading spirit. Every act and habit of the instructor is swelled into importance as associated with his position. The tide of his emotions and thoughts and habits flows back upon these expanding capacities, filling them, and leaving its deposits there, as the tide wave of the ocean urges its way into all the bays and indentations of the coast and leaves its marks upon the yielding shores. There is a peculiar responsibility resting upon the teacher in this respect. He has assumed, in virtue of his office, the relation of parent to all his school, during the hours they remain in his presence, and the parents have a right to claim at his hand an honest fulfilment of all the duties of the relation, as far as it rests within his powers. All the wholesome, and courteous, and generous, and noble, and Christian impressions of home, may be distorted or effaced by the more powerful and continually repeated impressions of the schoolroom; or the lack of these in the families of the ignorant and vicious may be largely compensated by the more healthful atmosphere of the child's daily home for six hours. A most onerous and enacting relation is this. Its worldly rewards are small, yet its claims cannot be avoided without fearful retributions. The teacher receives not the pecuniary return of some forms of mechanical labor. He never could be paid, in money, for the severe self-discipline, daily anxiety, and mental earnestness, absolutely demanded in addition to the heavy routine tasks in the school, and yet the conscientious teacher can never escape these claims upon him. His rewards must be expected from the benedictions of his own heart, and from the decisions of a higher tribunal. "It is worthy of special observation," says a late writer, "that those professions which are most intimately concerned with the highest interests of the race are, more than others, remote from the operations of ordinary worldly motives, and, to a greater extent, left to the power of conscientious and religious considerations. The man who has nothing to bring to the duties of a teacher but so much work for so much pay, and who retires satisfied when the mechanical functions of his office are performed, may be pronounced wholly unfit for the responsibilities of a profession which acts upon mind. He might become a respectable artizan or laborer, but not a teacher of youth. He is not fit to be trusted with the culture of intellect. He does not sympathize with its wants or destinies. Whoever rightly comprehends these will shrink from the responsibility of the teacher's profession, or he will labor to satisfy them with all the solicitude that a sense of personal and religious obligation can inspire. He will habituate himself to reflect that he is engaged in making impressions that must remain ineffaceable—that he is giving to mind such developments and tendencies as it shall bear with it through eternity—that no other man can correct *his* mistakes, or supply his deficiencies, or atone for his faults. What he does must remain forever essentially unchanged; what he neglects to do will remain undone."

The general temper and spirit of the master becomes the prevailing spirit of the school. An observer cannot but be struck with the marked difference exhibited in different schools, giving a distinct and easily recognized character to each. Of the celebrated Rugby School in England, one of its pupils remarked: "Whatever peculiarity of character was impressed on the scholars whom it sent forth was derived, not from the genius of the place, but from the master. Throughout, whether in the school itself or in its after effects, the one image that we have before us is not Rugby but Arnold." If the master is easy and nerveless in his habit, the school will be dull and indolent; if he is cool and phlegmatic, the atmosphere of the school will be frigid and cheerless; if he is warm and affectionate, it will be genial and wholesome; if the master is of a bustling and noisy temper, whatever may be the discipline of the school, the pupils will be infected by it, and exhibit its effects out of doors, even if it is repressed within the school walls. If there is a roughness and want of refinement in the teacher's address, all his awkward and ungraceful phrases and manners, greatly exaggerated, will reappear in the conversation and intercourse of the scholars. The example of the teacher will be a thousand-fold more potent than his precepts. He may attempt to chasten the rudeness of his pupils, and point out the importance and beauty of a refinement of manners, of a chaste and pure speech, of a gentlemanly and courteous behavior; but if, in his personal manners, he lacks these graces—if he speaks roughly, and merely nods his recognition as he meets his pupils, and is careless of his movements when before them—the powerful undertow of his example will sweep away from the memories of the children the unillustrated precepts of his lips.

How powerful and permanent will be these impressions, and what an almost irresistible influence will they have over the lives of the youth now sitting under their instructions! By the character of his discipline, thorough and rigid though it be, but conducted on low, cunning, and often mean principles, the teacher may, unintentionally indeed, but none the less effectually, blunt the moral sensibilities, and blight all noble, magnanimous and generous impulses, uproot virtuous and honest principles, and implant deception and treachery. And the converse of this will be true, with the individual exceptions to be found in all schools of any number, not affecting the force of the argument, but illustrating the perversity of human nature. By a native and cultivated nobleness of manner on the part of the teacher, by continued appeals to such traits of character, and by conducting the daily discipline upon the presumption manifest to all the keen eyed and quickly impressed youths of the school, that they are ingenuous and truthful, these noble and ennobling virtues may be developed into maturity and into self-determining power. To secure this result, says the biographer of the model teacher to whom we have already alluded, "arose Mr. Arnold's practice, in which his own delicacy of feeling and uprightness of purpose powerfully assisted him, of treating the boys as gentlemen and reasonable beings, of making them respect themselves by the mere respect he showed to them, of showing that he appealed and trusted to their own common sense and conscience. Lying, for example, he made a great moral offence, placing implicit confidence in a boy's assertion, and then, if a falsehood was discovered, punishing it severely. He never seemed to be on the watch for boys, as if distrusting them, but always checked any attempt at further proof of an assertion. 'If you say so,' he would say, 'that is quite enough—*of course* I believe your word,' and there grew up in consequence a general feeling that 'it was a shame to tell Arnold a lie—he always believed one.'"

A punishment may be so administered as to appear to the child to be the personal revenge of the teacher, for the personal insult he seems to have received from his misconduct. It may appear to be the triumphant assertion of the master's unlimited power, and of the boy's utter defenselessness, begetting within him a sentiment of anger against the teacher, and of hatred towards the school; destroying his self-respect and quenching all ambition to improve his mind and habits. Or it may be so administered as to appear only the established and necessary penalty of a wholesome requirement, upon which he has made a voluntary breach—a matter of no small grief to the teacher, and awakening within his heart a pang of sorrow vastly more acute than the physical pain experienced from the punishment, and an inward determination never to bring upon himself a similar condemnation. The one is merely penal and painful, the other is disciplinary and corrective.

The teacher's heart should be the home of all noble and generous sentiments, that they may fall spontaneously from his lips, on all proper occasions. And these occasions will not be wanting. In the daily readings in the historical and geographical recitations, in allusions to current events, high, and noble, patriotic, and humane opinions, falling from his mouth, will become the seeds of thought and of future acts in the hearts and lives of the susceptible listeners before him.

There are some classes of scholars that will be more seriously affected than others by the bearing of the teacher towards them. In every school there will be found children of a peculiarly delicate mental and physical organization, sensitive to a weakness, lacking confidence in themselves, and yet earnestly craving, and actually requiring, for the full development of their capabilities, the manifest approbation of others. These minds may be encouraged, strengthened, and educated for high and important duties and offices in manly life, or they may be crushed and blighted, and sent out into the world with an uncorrected, morbid distrust of themselves, suspicious of their fellows, preying upon themselves, and experiencing a living purgatory. The teacher who cannot discern these temperaments has certainly not enough knowledge of human nature, or an adequate measure of common sense, to meet the requirements of his office. He may not bear himself carelessly or roughly before these minds; their very weakness, and delicacy, and promise, beseechingly appeal to his manhood, and also to his responsibility to the Giver of this peculiarly susceptible organism. The same discipline that would be indispensable when applied to a phlegmatic boy would be the ruin of these. It is not the rod on the back, or the blister on the conscience, that they need, but the encouragement of a kindly recognition and appreciation of their endeavors, and a hopeful prophecy of their future success. There are griefs in a school-room as rending in their agony to the heart-strings of the little sufferers as the sorrows that assail our maturer lives. The sensitive child startled from his usual wits by the austerities of his teacher, misunderstood in his best endeavors, doubted in his honest asseverations, discouraged by the most persistent prophecies of his utter failure as a scholar, scalds his already burning face with as hot a tear as that eye will ever shed again, and heaves his heart with as heavy a throb, in its measure, as will ever stir his bosom. Few sensitive men look back to their school-boy days without an involuntary shudder at the recollection of some such scene as this. We may not despise or offend these shrinking little ones; they have a high mission upon the earth, and in the skies, if properly developed. They are Eolian harps, and from their delicate and silvery chords the hand of God will hereafter sweep wonderful harmonies.

There is another class situated at almost the opposite pole from these. Its members are the dull and stupid pupils of the school. The slowness of their mental movements is distressing; all their advances are by short and painful steps. Almost *everything* in their case depends upon the bearing and patience of the teacher towards them. The bright boys would advance almost without aid; they are the pride of the school-room; they are continually commended. But these dull boys labor harder than they; their struggles are more incessant; it is their misfortune, not their fault, that they are so much in the rear of their bright competitors. How much do they need the most hopeful and kindly encouragements, and how