

minds brought under the culture of spiritual husbandry. The virgin soil of youthful hearts is turned up and exposed to the warm breath of instruction. The seeds of evil germinating there—those indigenous to their nature, those shed upon them by a pernicious parental example, and those borne to them on the wings of every worldly influence—are sought out and carefully eradicated. Fresh sowings simultaneously take place; living germs of goodness are implanted; the stony heart is oftentimes made ductile by tender treatment; the conscience is aroused; the intellect is dredged and fructified; an appetite for nutritious knowledge is created, and thus the work hopefully goes on.

Sometimes the green blade of promise speedily appears, the budding intellect expands its leaves, and the progressive life yields a rich crop of piety and usefulness. In other cases the springing is delayed. The golden grain seems to have perished in the ungenial bed to which it had been consigned. But no rank passions and luxuriant vices have only checked the precious seed, and retarded its growth. The living rudiments can never rot; they lie deeply earthed in the heart; entangled, perhaps, with the fibres of sins that root themselves there; awaiting a predestined day, an hour, a place, when and where they shall suddenly burst, with startling energy, into sight. It may be on the desolate rock, when the wreck is going down; it may be in the heart of a deep wilderness, or in the worse solitude of a crowded city, when no friendly face beams upon them; it may be in the graveyard, in the day of desolation; it may be in the lonely chamber, in the dead of night; it may be in the dungeon, when crime is fully ripe; or it may be on the death-bed, when the judgment hour draws near; for on all these occasions, and in all these places, have the imperishable reminiscences of Sabbath-school instructions been suddenly revived, sometimes to communicate a glimmering hope of the Divine mercy, at others, to add fuel to the burnings of despair.

What rich fruitage has this blessed system already yielded! The Sabbath school is a nursery of national righteousness. It has supplied men of integrity for responsible stations in society; it has, from year to year, replenished the church of God with new members; it has provided the ministry of our land with not a few of its most illustrious ornaments, and has given the first impulses of seraphic zeal to many of the most distinguished missionaries of modern times. And who can compute the number of dormant minds it has quickened into activity; the fine intelligence it has opened and expanded; the memories it has stored with precious truths; the trailing virtues it has supported and invigorated; and the thriving vices it has withered, uprooted and destroyed!

It is, moreover, the peculiar excellence of

this educational system, that it not only develops intellect, but it develops it in a right manner. It does this, not by artificial stimulants, forcing a precocious and sickly growth, but by simply aiding the healthy action of nature. For it is not the abstract acuteness and capacity of any mind, but the proper application of its powers, that should be a matter of solicitude. A splendid intellect prostituted to the advocacy of error is a fearful curse; while the humblest talents, plighted to truth, and wisely directed, may prove an enduring blessing.

Had the Sabbath no other benefit of which to boast, than that of educating the incipient mind of the working classes, it would be entitled to our warmest gratitude and commendation. Sabbath-school instruction is one of the most hopeful and influential of all labors, and in the present perilous times is emphatically required! If the wide undergrowth of youthful mind be not carefully watched, and directed, in its earlier stages of development, small success will attend any subsequent efforts to improve it, when it has attained a dwarfed, misshapen, and stubborn maturity. A good impulse are not given to the rising intelligence of the laboring population in childhood, there is painful reason to fear that, in very many cases, the impressing season is irrevocably lost. Other teachers are in the field. Other influences are busy all around. Life opens up its beguiling scenes to the inexperienced eye. Harlotry lavishes its blandishments and weaves its snares. Scepticism insinuates its doubts. Profanity next approaches, flashing its witty jests and blasphemies. Enticements to dissoluteness and sensuality ply the unguarded victim on every side, till at length the time not spent in the duties of his calling is wasted in awful wickedness. Thus the fallen one becomes a wretched outcast from all good men. And thus minds that, with timely training, might have struggled into light and usefulness, become blasted by early neglect, and the fierce onset of earthly temptations.

But, if youth will push its way to the brink of destruction, let us, nevertheless, fence the path with all possible resistances and obstructions. Since the road to ruin is so easy and congenial to the heart of man, let us lodge in his mind every principle that is calculated to retard his progress and damp his guilty ardor. This object is blessedly achieved by the Sabbath-schools of our country.

What a fund of blessing is thus hoarded up in the Sabbath! Its uses in relation to mind are not at present fully understood; for its rich available sources have never yet been half explored. The present Sabbath-school system, for instance, is but the embryo of a more perfect scheme for intellectual elevation hereafter to be disclosed.