

Family Circle.

Intellectual Dangers of Youth.

As an intellectual being, there are snares to which you are peculiarly exposed. Most young men pride themselves upon their intellectual character. They are solicitous of being thought reflective and intelligent. In a modified degree this is proper. An undervaluing of mind has often led to a total abandonment of its proper development and culture. A just and modest estimate of what man is as an intellectual being will go far to pave the way for high purposes and resolves. But yet there is danger, concealed and unsuspected danger, here. Intellect has its appetites, and they must be met. Mind has its cravings, and they must be supplied. The danger lies in substituting a light, frothy literature—the popular reading of the day—for such intellectual food as can alone nourish the mind, enlarge its capacity for thought, enrich its stores of knowledge, and fit it for noble and great achievements. And what is that species of reading with which a young man is naturally the most fascinated? Is it not the literature of writers as Bulwer, and Dickens, and Sue? the literature of fiction and romance? the flimsy novel, the jejune story, the rapid poem? And has not the appetite created by such writings in its turn created a demand for their increased publication? Is there not a craving in the mind of a certain class of readers for more excitement? for new romances, for fresh novels, for works less intellectual in character, and less refined in taste? Would it not seem that the amiable and pious Cowper had written his caustic lines for the present day:

"Habits of close attention, thinking heads,
Become more rare as dissipation spreads,
Till authors hear at length one general cry,
Tickle and entertain us, or we die!"

Is it not a truly humiliating fact, that genius and intellect, quitting the lofty sphere of their operation, should thus stoop to gratify the cravings of bad taste, and pamper to the vain desires of depraved mind? Is it to such an end that the mental wealth of our nation is to be devoted? Let us inquire into the character of the popular literature of the day, of which, alas! the press is so fertile. Is it a literature calculated to inform the judgment, to furnish the mind, to strengthen the intellect? Is it a literature tending to cultivate the moral affections, to fill the heart with noble sentiments, to stimulate to generous actions, to virtuous resolves, and to prepare the mind to meet the stern duties, temptations, and trials of life, with cheerfulness, fortitude, and strength? Verily I believe not. Is it not rather a literature calculated to emasculate the mind, to stunt the power of thought, to starve the cravings of intellect, to vitiate the taste, to misguide the imagination, to give a false view of life, throwing over all its sober realities an air of fiction and romance, of ideality and of untruth, the most injurious and fatal in its consequences? Verily it is so. It is impossible to form a just estimate of works of fiction, and not to condemn them in the severest terms, as baneful in their tendency, and as disastrous in their effects. Their intellectual tendency is bad, their moral tendency infinitely more so.—For the most part, they are constructed upon false principles of philosophy, morality, and religion. They are generally so framed as to mock at virtue, and to lend a charm to vice; to lessen the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and to stifle every aspiration after holiness. They degrade the character of God by falsifying it; they annihilate his law by lowering its standard; and they weaken the bond of moral obligation between man and man, by holding up to laughter and to scorn every noble virtue and every generous action. Let it be remembered that these works, for the most part, fall into the hands of those whose principles are yet unfixed, whose judgments are yet unformed, whose minds are yet unfortified, and who are but just preparing to take their part in the great drama of life. They need a literature far different from this—works such as will fit them for the part that will be assigned to each. But at the very period that their intellect should be expanding, and

their moral character should be forming, and proper views of the relations, the duties, and the responsibilities of life should be fixing in their minds, they are dreaming away their time, enervating their noblest powers, unbridling their passions, and repressing the growth of every noble impulse, of every generous sentiment, and of every virtuous resolve, by drinking at the fountain of a fictitious, and in many cases a demoralizing literature.

And what is the first effect of such reading upon the female character? Not the less melancholy and injurious. The sphere which every woman is to occupy in life is second to none in the far-reaching influence which it possesses. Vast are the interests intrusted to her hands. As a friend, as a daughter, as a sister, as a wife, as a mother, her power is tremendous, her responsibilities are appalling. Gentle and modest in its nature, her influence yet insinuates itself into every relation and department of life. But in what school is female mind to be instructed, and female character to be formed? Is it the school of such a literature as I have been describing and condemning,—the literature of poetry and of romance? Will she, from such writers as Bulwer, and Eugene Sue, as Dickens and DeKock, or from such works as Ernest Maltravers, and Paul Clifford, and others of like character and tendency, learn what her proper duties are in each of these different relations of domestic life? What kind of a sister, a daughter, a wife, a mother, will she make, following such standards as these? What must be the influence of such writers and of such writings upon the heart of a woman who can

"Weep as she reads the wrongs of Alice's ear,
And spurn a shivering beggar from the door."

Should the eye of a female light upon this page, O, let the voice of a brother, of a husband, of a parent, prevail, in dissuading her from a literature imbued with sickly sentimentality, false principles of virtue, erroneous views of religion, and calculated to unfit the mind for the solemn duties and the severe trials of the present life, and for the tremendous realities of the life which is to come.—*Rev. Octavius Winslow.*

Brothers and Sisters.

It always grieves me to see children disagree—but to behold children of the same family quarrelling is peculiarly painful to me. I have been young, but the days of my childhood are over. I have brothers and sisters, and, when young, we sometimes disagreed; we called each other names—we turned away and would not play together—true, it was not often so, but it sometimes was, though it never ought to have been. Could I now efface all those seasons from my mind, most gladly would I do it; but they are impressed deeply on the memory, and old Time's fingers can never erase them. When we acted thus, we were all unhappy, but we knew not that we were stirring up for ourselves unhappiness that would break upon us in the future, and cleave to us through all our earthly pilgrimage. But so it was; we have found it out now, by very painful experience; we now no longer dwell together. Many years ago the beloved form of our dear father was laid in the graveyard; we were little children then, and knew not the loss we sustained. Our dear mother, too, now reposes in the ground close by our father's grave; many miles now separate me from my brothers and sisters. Years roll by, but I am not permitted to see them—I hear not their voices, but I often think of our childhood days, how much happiness I had, and how much more we might all have had, if we had been pleasant to each other, and never disagreed. I love my brothers and sisters, and I do not think the world ever can produce better or kinder ones; and could we live together now, I think we should be always pleasant, and prove that "love worketh no ill, but beareth all things." I pray you, brothers and sisters, for your own sake, and for your own happiness, at present and in future years, always be kind to each other. Ah, in after years, when you are far away from those dear ones whom I know you love, notwithstanding all your disagreements, the remembrance of the strife which you now allow to exist among

you will be a gnawing canker to your peace. Oh, then, listen to the pleading voice of one who has felt the evil consequences of discord between brothers and sisters—though that discord was not greater than ordinarily exists in a family among the children—and be persuaded to live in peace. What a blessed world this would be, if there was no strife in it—no variance, no cross words, no envy. Oh, try to make such a world, by cultivating a right spirit at home in the family. Always speak kindly—always act kindly—never get angry, or look cross—if any of the home circle should be cross to you, do not return the crossness, but rather give a kiss for a blow, and a smile for an unkind word; this will make you all happy again—and the reflection of having thus acted will add much to your happiness in future years.—*Mother's Friend.*

Religion in early life.

No one, at the close of an advanced life, has ever regretted that his early years were spent in the service of God. But thousands have regretted, when upon a dying bed, that the morning of their days was spent in rebellion against the King of kings. "If," says an interesting writer, "there be true honour in the universe, it is to be found in religion—even the heathens are sensible of this; hence the Romans built the temples of virtue and honour close together, to teach that the way to honour was by virtue. Religion is the image of God in the soul of man—can glory itself rise higher than this? What a distinction to have this lustre put upon the character of youth! To be a child of God, an heir of glory, a disciple of Christ, a warrior of the cross, a citizen of the New Jerusalem, from our youth up, adorns the brow with amaranthine wreaths of fame. A person converted in youth is like the sun rising on a summer's morning to shine through a long, bright day; but a person converted late in life is like the evening star, a lovely object of Christian contemplation, but not appearing till the day is closing, and then but for a little while." Think of this, mothers, and make religion appear lovely in your children's eyes by your own bright examples, that they may be induced to choose the God of their mothers in very early life.

General Miscellany.

Sunset.

As glorious as he rises sets the beaming king of day. He casts purple and gold upon the regions to which he has given light and blessing during his diurnal course, and a soft blush overspreads the distant sky. What a spectacle! Yonder, all glows as with fire; here, all reposes in mild and rosy light, and there, all in purest gold! How it streams over the water—how it gleams upon the windows!

What a sunset! That which sets thus, must surely rise again.

That is not a parting—no, it is a pledge of return, full of triumphant anticipation.—That glance upon the world is a glance of promise, a glance of joy at the completed work, a great glance of victory at the coming night. And that which we call the glow of evening, does it not appear to the opposite hemisphere as the blush of morn?

Stillness of evening, how thou dost refresh with thy coolness, with thy dew, all that which heat of day has enfeebled, and invitest man into thy balmy bowers, pourest peace into his soul, and softenest and stillest his heart, and drawest tears, sweet tears, from his melted bosom.

The night draws darkly on to cover and to cool, and to hush all to repose, all that the day has rendered hot, and sore, and weary. Slumber, soft, refreshing slumber, will soon fall upon all beings, enwrap them gently, and rock them in golden dreams.

Sleep of the night, thou costliest gift of Nature, how thou dost refresh all wearied beings! how kindly dost thou veil from man his sorrows and his cares, and liftest gently from his bosom the heavy pain, and renderest him forgetful of all the toils of life.

And how my soul delights in the glow which proclaims that day is about to reap-

Yes, he will rise when sleep has refreshed me; I shall see him, the bright king of day, and all life will awake to welcome him—all life will be joyous at his approach. Happy that I can see all this, that my heart can feel it all!

The truly great and good man dies as the sun sets. More glorious than in life he appears in death. His heart heaves mightily, and beams of light overspread his countenance; and that all is noble in his bosom stirs with power against the dark tide of death; above all, his consciousness of immortality. His last glance is a glance of victory upon the world, a glance of joy at his completed work, a glance of triumph at the already dawning morn of a new existence.

But also the good man, who, with limited powers, has practised silent virtue, and has spent his life wisely and benevolently, dies as the sun sets, in the remembrance of the blessings of Heaven, which have strengthened and delighted him on earth, with a feeling of that heavenly love which cheered and warmed his days in the consciousness of the good which he has performed, and in the happy hope of a better life to which he is hastening.

Thus let me die, Lord of my life, Beneficent Father—die in the feeling of thy love, in the consciousness of a life passed in thy service, in the happy hope of a heavenly immortality!

Bird Music Extraordinary.

A curious circumstance, quite aside from the ordinary dictates of instinct, occurred in the case of a young bobolink, in the family of the Rev. J. W. Turner, of Great Barrington, Mass. He was caged, at first, apart from a pair of canaries, which were in another cage in the same room. The bobolink never sang at all from June to December, until he was permitted to share in the same cage the civilities and sympathies of his neighbours, the canaries, who had been so long entertaining him with their sweet and unwearied strains. When admitted to the same cage with them, he tried most assiduously to learn their song. At first, however, for a long time, with miserable success enough. He would stand and watch them in an agony of attention, and then try to imitate their notes. He would swell out his throat, and stretch up his neck as they did, and then, with a violent effort, try to sound one note, which, in spite of all his zeal and labour, proved to be a mere rough scream. At this humiliating failure he would be so provoked and enraged, that he would fly at his offensive and well-meaning mates and teachers, and peck them unmercifully, and drive them from their perch. So he did for three or four weeks, before any apparent progress was made in his studies. But his perseverance was equal to the difficulties he had to overcome. At length he could sound one note well, and one only. And so he continued for six weeks longer; learning one note at a time, till he finally completed the whole canary song to perfection. Then he would sing with them in perfect harmony and perfect time, always closing at the exact note with them.

It is also a little singular that although through all this training, he was never known to begin to make a sound till the canaries had struck the key-note, yet, after he had acquired the skill to sing their song, he must always himself give the signal by a significant *chuck*, when, instantly, the canaries, generously forgetting or forgiving his former incivilities, would strike in with him and perform the piece with the greatest perfection, and with the highest delight to themselves and the listening family, who enjoyed this singular concert through the early part of every day for the whole summer.

It is also worthy of remark that this successful essayist in foreign music was never known to utter a note in his native tongue, till he had mastered the canary. Then, after a few weeks, when he found himself something of an independent singer, and capable, as he thought, of leading the choir, he at last ventured to go without the chorus and attempt his own native melody. In his first attempts at the solo, it was most diverting to hear him in confused notes—part in his native bobolink, and part in canary—till at length he was able to expel all foreign element from his style, and sing only the pure bobolink.