

One of the greatest difficulties which meet the efforts of a teacher is diagnosis of the neurological symptoms of his pupils. The child is full of emotions, the immature buds of character, and any rough or inconsiderate treatment of such emotions may, in some cases, ruin a child's character for life. The nervous systems of some children, and also of adult human beings, are so extremely sensitive that they require to be treated with the greatest judgment and circumspection. In illustration of how sensitive some nervous systems may be to exterior vibrations, I will mention the case of a young lady of my acquaintance who was an accomplished musician. She married a man who had the misfortune to be stone deaf. Yet, strange to say, he could appreciate her music, and always knew when she was playing in the same room, even when he had his back turned towards her. In this case the waves of sound must have vibrated a highly sensitive nervous system and set it in motion.

We ourselves experience something similar in the case of sad or lively music. Why do we call it sad or lively? On account of the vibrations produced upon our nervous system by the differing waves of sound.

There are attractions and repulsions in human nature which we all of us experience, but find it difficult to account for them, but there is no doubt that they vary in a large degree according to the sensitiveness of the nervous system of the people concerned. Beauty of face and beauty of form act upon the eye, and thence by the nervous system to the brain; but the same face or form may affect different people in very varying degrees.

There is a force we call sympathy, which is highly attractive when it meets a similar indent upon another brain. Children and dogs are quick in discerning this force, and in responding to it. Instances might be multiplied by the thousand to prove how extremely sensitive the brain is to impressions from surrounding circumstances, and how it may be exalted or lowered according to the nature of the impressing objects.

But is not this the best possible argument we could have in favour of advanced free education for the people?

Because the higher the education of each unit of society the greater must be the elevating force of surrounding circumstances, there is a reflex action between brain and brain.

A unit of society is surrounded by other units, each of them possessing a reverberatory power of brain. If the brain of each unit of society is indented by a force which is opposed to the gravitation of humanity towards its lower order of existence, then the reverberatory power of the brains of the whole of society must tend to raise humanity up the scale of evolution, and vice versa. Therefore, the greater number of brains which are properly indented the greater must be the elevating force of surrounding circumstances, and the higher humanity must rise in the scale of evolution.

But it is education, properly organized, which indents the brain on the upward scale, hence the paramount importance of a general education of the highest order.

Exception may possibly be taken to a portion of my argument on the plea that it tends to reduce human thought and human action down to a mere scientific formula, and that it does not leave room for the ethics of religion with all their beautiful emotions and holy aspirations.