

OUR YOUNG FOLKS.

"THE MUTABILITY OF TASTE."

AN ESSAY READ AT THE CLOSING EXERCISES OF THE BRANTFORD YOUNG LADIES' COLLEGE, BY MISS HATTIE M'GIBBON.

IN every age and country changes have taken place in the habits and modes of human life, which show the fickleness of the public taste.

Not only do we find this true of individuals, of nations and of peoples, but of the world at large. Take for example the literature of England. Books which were written many years ago, and were then perused with the greatest delight, have lost all their charms, are read only by the curious and the scholars, and have now but an obscure place in our libraries.

In the earliest ages of our literature theology was the principal subject which engaged the attention of the educated, of the clergy of all classes; and the monks in their cells wrote, early and late, countless volumes on this favorite theme.

When however we contrast the literature of the present age with that of past centuries, including even the time when the gifted Milton gave to the world those productions of his genius, "Paradise Lost" and "Regained," we cannot but note how altered the public taste has become.

The writings of the generation just past are little read, they have a quaintness and stiffness about them which we do not like; the literature of our day is more chaste and simple, and deals more in facts and realities than in assumptions and sentiments.

Amusements present as much variety as literature.

In the time of the Normans the chase was the favorite pastime. When the wearied lords returned from their long and successful day's sport and were feasting at the board, their hearts were refreshed and enlivened by the sweet music of the minstrel who was always a welcome guest in their halls.

How changed the amusements of the present age. The chase has now degenerated into fox hunting, and this too is fast disappearing. Out door amusements such as cricket, lacrosse, base ball, and croquet have taken their place; these agree with our tastes and habits, while the amusements of our forefathers would be regarded as coarse and offensive.

Again the theatres of the middle ages were far inferior to those we have at the present day. The rich scenery which adds so much to the interest of the dramas of our time was almost totally absent, and the moralities of the drama and stage were of an order then that would not be pleasing to us.

How strange it would seem to us, living in this age of refinement when, all the accomplishments of our dramas are suited to our tastes, to see how oddly the actors of long ago went through the performance of such tragedies as "Macbeth" and "Hamlet," the productions of the greatest of our dramatic poets.

Among the accomplishments of the fair ladies of olden times was the skillful playing on the harp, often accompanied by their own voices in sweet melodies almost forgotten, but by the fickleness of fashion becoming favorites with us again. No lady's education was then considered complete without this graceful

accomplishment, but the taste is now somewhat changed, and the young ladies who attend our fashionable schools and colleges cannot esteem their education complete without some skill in the use of the piano and in singing the love songs of our day.

We do not need to look farther back than the present generation to see what a change is constantly taking place in the fashion of costume and toilet. The habits of one year disappear the next. Every season has something new in form and color. The adornments of last year are the rejected of this. So fickle too is fashion that it sometimes brings back the quaint but graceful attire of our ancestors.

Not only is this the case but each individual has his or her own taste. We may to a certain extent read a person's character by her style of dress. In meeting with those who are gaudily attired, we conclude that they are given to frivolity and are unconcerned about anything which tends to their ultimate benefit.

Although rich dress is not to be despised, yet when unaccompanied by good taste, its pleasing effect is destroyed.

Amid all this change and fickleness there is nevertheless such a thing as good taste; but this can only be obtained by education and culture, by a due regard to truth and fitness. It will also generally be found that good taste depends upon good morals—that religion of the purest kind is the best foundation for the highest order of refinement and taste.

DANGEROUS SMARTNESS.

A LITTLE while ago, it is said, a farmer in Pennsylvania set a trap with a tempting bait to catch a fox which was making unwelcome and expensive visits to his hen-roost.

When the farmer went to see his trap it had been sprung, or "touched off." The bait was gone, and instead of a live captured fox there was only a quiet stick of wood fast in the jaws of the trap.

This happened for fourteen nights. The farmer could see no tracks but his own and those of the fox. It perhaps seemed discouraging work to furnish baits only to have them stolen.

But the man persevered; he did not give it up and think, "Well, it's no use." No; he baited once more, and on the fifteenth night he found a fine old fox with his nose fast in the jaws of the trap, and in his mouth was a stick of wood. Once too often he had tried his sharp game of springing the trap and stealing the bait. He was caught at last.

This little story shows that some kinds of smartness are dangerous. The fox was cunning, but his cute tricks cost him dear.

Sometimes human beings, as well as foxes, try to gain something by sharp tricks. They seem to enjoy for a while the fruit of their dishonest doings. They may many times escape catching, but they generally get safely " nabbed " at last.

Lying, cheating, pilfering, disobeying, and other naughty doings may seem to be profitable for a while, but by and by the trap snaps in an unexpected way, and the evil-doer is caught and punished, or found out and put to shame.

The safest and best way is to do right.—S. S. Advocate.

THE THREE PETS.

AS I was travelling on the prairie I stopped at a house where they had a number of pets. One was a robin, another was a brown thrush, and the third was a young wolf about two-thirds grown, or about as large as a common-sized dog. Robin Redbreast was quite a sociable chap in his way, and Brown Thrush was quite busy in some matters pertaining to her household affairs; but Mr. Wolf, the good-for-nothing fellow that he is, spends a good share of his time lying on top of a box sunning himself, as I have seen many people do; the only difference being that Mr. Wolf was chained there, and the people were not.

The owner of the birds told me that Sir Robin washed himself regularly every day; but that Miss Thrush only washed once a week, and that was invariably done on Saturday. I was led to admire Robin for his cleanliness,—that he was like some good children, up in the morning, clean and bright as a new silver dollar, ready for their studies, or any thing else that comes in their way.

But then, thinking of Miss Thrush, I must say I hardly knew what to think. I do not want to talk very loudly about the faults of children. Do you suppose there are any children who would only wash once or twice a week if their parents did not remind them of it? But, really, I was glad of one thing; and that was, that Miss Thrush did not play or loiter around all the week, and then do the neglected work on Sunday. I have seen people do almost nothing all the week; and on Sunday morning they had so much to do, and so many things were pressing upon them, that they would desecrate the holy Sabbath day to get them done.

God has made us for a good and glorious purpose. We are a great deal better, and of more importance than birds with their kite-like wings, or parrots that can talk, or canaries that can sing so very sweetly. Will you not remember that we must give an account for all we say or do? that, when Jesus calls for us, we will have to tell him all about our actions here, whether they be good or bad?—*Children's Friend.*

A WAYSIDE COURTESY.

I WAS once walking a short distance behind a handsomely-dressed young lady, and thinking, as I looked at her beautiful clothes, "I wonder if she takes as much pains with her heart as she does with her body." A poor old man was coming up the walk with a loaded wheelbarrow, and just before he reached us he made two attempts to go into the yard of a small house; but the gate was heavy, and would swing back before he could get through. "Wait," said the young girl, springing lightly forward, "I'll hold the gate open." And she held the gate open till he passed in, and received his thanks with a pleasant smile as she went on. "She deserves to have beautiful clothes," I thought; "for a beautiful spirit dwells in her breast."—S. S. Advocate.

REAL glory consists in the conquest of ourselves.

WOULD you like to know the name of the boy who blackened the boots of the students at Oxford University? It was George Whitfield.