

forgotten. For several weeks, perhaps, except when some ailment produces acute pain, no sensation is felt beyond those connected with the instinctive propensity for food and heat. In this stage, man differs little from the young of other animals; he is as weak, as helpless, as much without reason as they. The *germ* of his being, indeed, is nobler: but the features of his nobility are scarcely visible to the eye of the keenest observer, and it depends very much on circumstances what the individual shall become. Let that babe fall from his cradle upon his head, and it may become impossible to develop any of those intellectual faculties of which the brain is the organ. The instrument with which the mind works may by such an accident be disordered, damaged, or destroyed. For life he may be an idiot, in whom scarce a trace of intellect is discoverable: or should the damage done not be so disastrous as this, it may appear in some of those slighter aberrations which mark the character of individuals,—such as, an incapacity of fixed attention to any subject,—a total unfitness for particular branches of study,—a memory defective in one or all of the qualities of that faculty;—it may be slow to receive, quick to lose, dull to give back what is committed to it: or the injury may display itself in the disorder of some of the moral affections, as in a particular obtuseness of feeling in questions of right and wrong,—in an extreme susceptibility of envy, jealousy, or resentment,—in a tendency to the indulgence of gloomy and desponding thoughts; or in a predominance of the animal propensities over the intellectual powers. In short, an injury, less or greater, may be inflicted by such an accident on that soft, pulpy substance, encased in the bones of the head, and so minute that the keenest eye of the anatomist could not detect it, yet it will entail, if not an absolute idiocy, an aberration that

will disturb the balance of the mental and moral powers, and chain down to the regions of perpetual twilight, a being that might have gazed upon the sun, and explored the universe: that might have extended the boundaries of science, and been a guide and benefactor to his species.

9. We have supposed such a calamity to be the consequence of an accidental fall from the cradle in infancy. But a similar result may follow from many other causes, acting *gradually*, and not very easily distinguishable, yet at variance with those physical laws by which the healthy growth of the human being is regulated. The neglect of care and cleanliness; exposure to heat or cold, in a degree beyond what infancy can safely bear; the unsuitableness of food, or irregularity in the administration of it; some infantile ailment, scarcely perceived even by the eye of maternal love, or unwisely treated by the hand that seeks to relieve it,—may exert such an injurious influence during the first years of childhood, as shall give rise to some of those morbid conditions from which in various degrees mental and moral eccentricities originate, and that shall entail very miserable consequences on the individual and on society.

10. These well-known facts may illustrate the evils arising from accident, *e.* from a management palpably at variance with nature, upon that organ, on the healthy condition of which the sound exercise of the mental faculties depend. But it is certain that from a very early period of childhood there are *moral influences* also brought into play, whose effect will be scarcely less injurious to the brain and nervous system, of which it is the centre. The peculiarity of temper and disposition which distinguishes an individual begins to manifest itself at an early period. It is supposed by many that this difference is *congenital*, or born with