

felt satisfied that the vanity of the young candidates for public admiration must be greatly stimulated, and a sense of their vast importance deeply infused. It is indeed apparently a very innocent and interesting way of occupying public attention occasionally, but we fear that what is amusement to the public is death to some of the best sentiments of childhood.—*N. Y. Mother's Magazine.*

### Moral Poisons: The Antidote.

Under the general caption of "Moral Poisons," I have, in this Magazine, repeatedly called the attention of parents to the corrupting influence upon the morals of children and youth of a great portion of the light literature of the day. I propose in the present number to make a suggestion or two in relation to the antidote—the only efficient and practical antidote—for these poisons. I do not hesitate to direct these suggestions to parents; for on them mainly rests the responsibility either of fostering and furnishing means for gratifying a depraved literary taste in the young, or of forming a better taste and applying a remedy where the mind is already vitiated. It becomes then, to them, a most interesting and solemn question what is the duty of Christians and philanthropists who sustain the relation of fathers and mothers, in view of the danger to be apprehended from impure light reading?

#### 1. Parents must teach sound principles to their children on this subject.

They must show them the evils attending the reading of the fashionable novels of the day, and other vicious works of the lighter order. This can be done. Nothing is more practicable. One single number of that excellent monthly sheet published by the American Tract Society—the "*American Messenger*,"—one of the principal aims of which is to show the evils of impure literature, will furnish ready for your use ample evidence from their nature, that these words are coals of fire, and that the mind cannot come in contact with them without fearful danger of being burned. It will do more. It will point to authentic facts, and show what is more to the purpose than all the theories we may have on this subject, that many a youth has had his imagination influenced by these vicious novels, and that, through their influence, he has been ruined, temporarily and eternally.

Children have a conscience in relation to this matter, and that conscience can be reached, if the proper means are employed.—They have hopes and fears respecting the formation of character; and to these hopes and fears every intelligent and judicious parent can successfully appeal. I saw this position verified a few days since. A young lady of my acquaintance had read one of the most objectionable of Eugene Sue's novels, and although she acknowledged there were some features in the work from which the eye of virtue turned away in pain, yet, on the whole, she thought it might be safely read by those whose principles were firmly established, and in that class she ranked herself. She declared unhesitatingly that she felt no evil resulting from their perusal, and that she must be indulged in this amusement. I remonstrated with her seriously, yet kindly, and appealed to her conscience and to her fears. I thank God that these remonstrances were heeded. She promised me voluntarily, that she would never read another novel of that class.

I know another recent case in point. A pious mother learned with pain that a son had clandestinely obtained several of Bulwer's novels, and had read them. The young man was not a professor of religion, yet this godly mother made him feel that by the perusal of these works of fiction, he was striving against the Spirit, and placing formidable barriers in the way of his salvation. She showed him that the code of morals which is inculcated by Edward Bulwer and those of his school, was drawn up by the arch-deceiver, and that just so far as they exerted their legitimate influence, they were calculated to educate the soul for the pit from which they were imported. "I know it, I feel it," said the young man. "I was sensible of it while I read these novels. They afford a pleasant amusement; but I will not hazard the welfare of my soul for a momentary pleasure. I will read no more."

There cannot be a doubt that many of the evils which now flow from a poisoned literature would be averted, if parents would faithfully and affectionately inculcate right principles on the subject to their children, and substantiate these principles by facts which have come under their own observation, or are well authenticated by others.

#### 2. Parents must act the part of censors over the books and periodicals which are candidates for favor in their families.

I am aware that to some this will seem tyrannical and overbearing, and I admit that moral suasion in this case, as in every other is preferable to coercion, if it is effectual. But if advice does not succeed, I am confident a sound and healthful domestic discipline calls imperiously for something more.

The objections to such a censorship are so plausible and so prevalent, that it may be well to look at the matter somewhat in detail. It is said, that when we prescribe to our children what they shall and what they shall not read, we assume a lordship over their consciences. We think otherwise. We do not tell our children what they shall believe in matters affecting their eternal interests. We do not make it criminal in them to differ from us in opinion, if they see reason for such a difference. We simply state to them the truth. We know that there are certain agents, which, when they act at all upon the soul, work in it moral death. We warn our children against them, and if warning and entreaties are not sufficient, forbid them employing means which will draw them away from God and heaven. Is this lordship it over the conscience? Can a consistent parent, the heaven-constituted guardian of the temporal and eternal interests of his children, do less than this? Nay, will not the frown of God rest upon that parent if he do not so far "command his children and his household after him?" If a son or a daughter persists in taking arsenic, after a parent's affectionate and earnest counsels to the contrary, is it not plainly the duty of that parent to restrain his child, if he can do so, by a positive command? But arsenic is no more poisonous to the physical constitution, than are some of the fashionable novels which find their way into hundreds of families, to the morals of thousands of youth who read them. If a prohibition is proper in the former case, by what logic can it be made to appear that it is not proper in the latter? Are physical evils more to be dreaded than moral evils? Is the body, then, of more consequence than the spirit?

But we are told that this censorship on the part of the parent can only be maintained on the assumption that the judgement of the parent is infallible. This is in effect the same as to affirm that parental restraint must never be exercised, unless there be such infallibility. Why is not the objection raised in other circumstances—for instance, when the parent requires his children to attend family worship, when they are disinclined, or to visit with him the house of God? Does any one contend that this is an unwarrantable dictation, or that there is in it an arrogance of infallibility?

The truth is, God has committed the keeping of the immortal spirit, during the green and tender period of childhood and early youth, in an important sense, to the parent; and it is a duty than which none is more solemn and binding, to train up that child in the way he should go, that when he is old he may not depart from it. Neither the father nor mother is infallible. But they are to look to God for directions, and then act according to their judgement and the dictates of an enlightened conscience. No sensible and judicious man or woman can err in regard to the general principle which ought to govern them in the selection of literary reading for their families, though they may be wrong in relation to some of the unimportant details of that principle. But however they may err respecting these details, God calls upon them to stand up fearlessly and firmly for the defence of this principle in their households. To allow the soul of the child of their fondest love, and the object of their most fervent prayers, to be contaminated by the foul breath that is exhaled from the pages of a licentious romance, is to prove a traitor to one of the highest, noblest, and most responsible trusts which Jehovah ever confided to man.

But I must drop the subject here somewhat abruptly—for I am breaking over the bounds assigned for the length of a single article—and reserve some additional thoughts which I wish to present for another number. I hope my readers are not weary of this discussion. If some of them are, I beg them to bear with me, for I assure them there are fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters, and the number is not few, who feel deeply on this subject; and who, while they point to the victims of this soul-destroyer in the shape of a poisoned literature—victims among their own kindred and at their own firesides—lift up the imploring hand, and with tears beg of the directors of the press to speak out on this subject, to sound the note of alarm, and suggest an effective remedy.—*Ibidi.*