

## Literary and Miscellaneous.

### EDUCATION ANALYSED.

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#### CHAPTER IV.

*Metaphysics.*—Matter even in its most etherealized form is totally inert; possessing no self-moulding, or self-moving power; yet it has *properties*, latent, until brought out by the force of mind, which modify the action of that force; or in other words, cause mind to exhibit certain manifestations when acting through it. These laws or properties, immutable and coexistent with its substance, are in perfect adaptation to the constitution of mind and subservient to its purposes; for there is nothing but adaptation and harmony in the "nature of things." Upon this inert matter, the Spirit of God "moved," fashioning a world of light, beauty and intelligent design—a counterpart of itself, all good, for a pure fountain can yield only sweet water. Hence theologians wisely bid us study in nature, the character and perfections of Deity. Did metaphysicians carry the same inductive spirit into the study of the human mind, there would be less clashing and vagueness. God is spirit; and we can study him only in his manifestations through matter, which he animates, so mind, the human mind can be studied only in its action on matter—the organism it animates. It fashions to itself the body which contains it. It makes itself a fitting tenement, and from the external we judge the internal. That the mind moulds the features is demonstrated by daily experience, and confessed tacitly by all. Even the child instinctively reads character in the countenances of those around it; its young mind turning like the magnet to the loadstone of sympathy and benevolence; and a close observer of mankind, can seldom be deceived in his estimate of those among whom he mingles. Now it is evident that each faculty of the mind, does not use every part of the organism simultaneously, or promiscuously, as is shown by the different expressions and developments, caused by the different states of feeling. Thus habitual sour temper contracts the brow, while care furrows it. We also know that the constant exercise of any part strengthens and develops it; hence parts most constantly used become disproportionably strong and predisposed to action, and re-acting by this condition on the mind, produce a tendency to excessive action in its corresponding faculties. Now each

faculty of the mind has its own proper stimulant in the external world to which it responds, or by which it is excited to action. Thus murder excites destructiveness; hence the blind courage, cruelty and fearful recklessness of life, in time of war; and hence too, the law of "blood for blood." Arrogance excites self-esteem, kindness, benevolence, &c., &c. Here, then, is the grand lever, by which the world of mind is moved—the secret of its education—the only means of its reformation. That educating power begins to exert itself with the existence of the mental germ, in the influence of the parent mind; and, in turn, the character it imparts, stamps its impression on the new organism. After birth, the influence of the parent mind, is exchanged for that of external circumstances; the exercise of any faculty in those around us, having a tendency to excite the same in us. Sensations, feelings, words and deeds, the action of other minds, stamp our individuality by exercising the same in us. This is the great secret of success in education; the solution of the great problem of government, both parental and civil. A proper realization of this truth would banish gibbets, knouts, guillotines, and every other instrument of torture from our earth, even to the pedagogue's ferule; would make penitentiaries places of confinement indeed, but confinement amid moral influences and manifestations of benevolence; would still domestic railing and breathe an atmosphere of kindness through our world; I for one, verily believe, *that the chief sins of our race, are those of ignorance.* Have not men, long enough tried to banish crime by force and fear? By corporeal inflictions and exhibitions calculated to appeal to, and stimulate the worst part of our nature? Has not the gibbet long enough goaded the assassin to deeds of blood? Has not the exhibition of brute force in government long enough cultivated the brute in human nature, and the rod and ferule long enough debased our children. Parents, have you a child whose angry temper disturbs and darkens your home? Speak firmly but *gently*. Wear a kindly smile. Sedulously keep it from scenes of cruelty and anger, and the noxious weeds will die out for want of nourishment. Is he addicted to deception and fraud? First of all remove temptation as much as possible, and then be sure that he sees only staunch integrity and openness in those around him. The old adage, that "*like begets like*," is an eternal truth. Here is a test too, for reformers and reform institutions. *Talk* as we will, words