

GOING WITH THE MAJORITY.

BY THE EDITOR.



T is a trite saying that God has given us a complex nature ; but there is a closely related truth not so generally apprehended,—namely, that everything with which we have to do here touches some of the secret springs of that complex nature, and leads to courses of action that shape the destiny of the soul. In the material universe there is a process of development constantly going on ; and this is true not only of the universe as a whole, but of each particular creature or thing in it. Development, properly understood, simply means the unfolding of that which was previously folded up. Cowper's lines upon the Yardley Oak express the idea exactly :—

“Thou wast a bauble once, a cup and ball
Which babes might play with ; and the thievish jay,
Seeking her food, with ease might have purloined
The auburn nut that held thee, swallowing down
Thy yet *close folded latitude of boughs*,
And all thy embryo vastness at a gulp.”

The results of this unfolding process depend upon two things,—the base from which the development proceeds, and the external influences which may modify that development as it goes on. The first determines the *nature*, the second the *form*, of the development. It is a universal law that everything develops in accordance with its own nature. If the nature is good, the development will be from good to better ; if the nature is evil, the development will be from bad to worse, unless there are powerful counteracting agencies by which its direction may be modified or changed. There is no finite power which can cause the oak to develop into a cedar, or the bulb of a hyacinth to unfold into a primrose ; but external influences may entirely change the form of the tree, and careful cultivation may even change the tinting of the flower.

These facts have a peculiar force when applied to human life and experience. The unfolding process goes on in mind and morals, as well as in nature, and the human heart is of all things most susceptible of external influences. It is very apt to take its hue, chameleon-like, from its surroundings, and, like wax, to retain whatever image may be impressed upon it. More especially is this true when its surroundings are unfavorable to purity and godliness ; for in human nature the development starts from a base that is not good, and thus, very often, both the internal impulse and the outward influences combine to pervert the character and the life. In view of all this, the importance of guarding against influences that are injurious, and of cultivating whatever will aid in the development of a symmetrical Christian life, cannot easily be overstated.

There is one particular tendency of human nature to which I wish to refer in this connection, that is, the tendency to follow blindly the example of