

With our limited knowledge, we are forced to confess that there are secret chambers in our brains, secret and unknown to those who surround us—yes, and secret and unknown even to ourselves, and they can only be unlocked and revealed by the key of temptation or of circumstance, whenever it may come; and there is not one of us who can foretell, with any degree of accuracy, what his or her conduct will be whenever that special temptation or circumstance shall arise. Therefore it becomes us to be very charitable in our judgments.

But the greater the mystery of the brain, the greater the necessity for the graduating trainers of it, the teachers of the young, to study its composition and to search for light and knowledge in order to be enabled to fashion it into its highest form.

There is an instinct in human nature that whispers to us of a higher existence. We talk of angels, and in doing so we picture an existence beyond ourselves. The nations worship intermediate deities, such as Brahma, Buddha, Zoroaster, Confucius, Christ, and Mohammed, and in each and every case the ideal is something superior to anything which is attained by existing humanity.

This beautiful ideal—the spiritual co-efficient which actuates the mechanism of humanity—is the force which is evolving mankind into a higher order of being, and religion, irrespective of sect, is its handmaid. But there is a counter-force in operation, namely, the gravitation of humanity towards its lower order of existence. There is a heaven, and there is a hell. Evolution beckons us towards the former; devolution drags us towards the latter; and between these two contending forces there exists that mysterious power in human nature to which we give the name of “free will.” It is a force which it is exceedingly difficult to define, yet we are all of us conscious of its possession because it forms the line of demarcation between a lunatic and a man who is responsible for his own actions. The man who has no volition over his actions is termed a lunatic; but any degree of will power which a sane man may possess must be exerted either to exalt or lower him in the scale of humanity, according as it is the resultant of the component forces which actuate him.

These component forces are not constant throughout his life, but they vary in direction and magnitude according to the impressions produced upon his brain by surrounding and accumulating circumstances.

We may, perhaps, be better able to appreciate the problem by supposing the case of an infant, born of highly intelligent and refined parents, being placed at its birth, if it were possible, in the society of gorillas or chimpanzees, to be suckled, reared, and brought up by them alone until it became adult. The antecedent probability is that such an adult would be bestial in its habits and manners, and also in its language, if it had any; but, mark you, not to the same degree as its associate gorillas or chimpanzees—and why not? On account of its inherited faculties. But if the same infant were placed at its birth under instructors, and in a society of the highest refinement, morality, and intelligence, it would as an adult be incomparably superior to its gorilla-reared simulacrum. In either case the brain would be fashioned by the impress of surrounding circumstances, and its reverberatory power would be proportioned accordingly.

Herein lies the grave responsibility which attaches to a teacher of the young, because it is in the power of an instructor, by virtue of his matured will force, to