

passive. It has no embryonic nature to develop, no hidden tendencies to some unknown result, no secret processes working great changes, expected by no one, and bursting, at length, suddenly upon the view by some new exhibition of talent, or some new form of character. To such an extent have these phenomena been observed in original minds, that a conclusion has often been hastily drawn disparaging to all education. All real talent, it is sometimes said, is self-developed and self-regulated. The truth contained in this statement is, that some minds have such strong intellectual instincts, and such natural energy, that they are less dependent on a teacher's aid than others; that in struggling with difficulties and overcoming obstacles, they acquire an independence and power which more than make up for a want of early elementary training. But even upon such intellects the influence of a genial teacher must be favorable, while to those of the common class it is indispensable. Still, it must not be forgotten that there are under-currents in almost every pupil's mind, which are not easily detected by the teacher or by the parent, which sometimes conduct to issues wholly unexpected. When remarkable powers and capacities are working thus in secret, the school training may come so little in contact with them as to do but little good or harm; or it may be that an earnest teacher's endeavors have been nothing but unsuccessful contests against natural proclivities which could not be resisted, but might, with more skill, have been guided and modified. In other pupils there is a weakness or dullness of intellect which effectually limits the teacher's power. His labor is not lost, it is true; but the public expectations are not in these instances realized. No one ought to be disappointed or discouraged at such results. They ought to be foreseen, and none but reasonable expectations ought to be cherished.

#### *School-room Education only partial.*

But the greatest obstruction to the teacher's success, the most absolute limitation of his power, is to be found in the fact, that of education, in its full and proper sense, only a part belongs to the school-room. Over that larger department of education given out of the school-room he has no control. For the character of such education other parties are generally held responsible. But even this responsibility cannot always be fixed definitely upon individuals. There are circumstances in the history of a people which have their educational influence, and yet cannot be changed. The pioneer in a new settlement is not bound to perform, in respect to education, more than the state of society will admit. If the population of the country is sparse, and there is a general want of refinement, and the means of high intellectual culture do not exist, he cannot be held answerable for deficiencies which he cannot prevent. In the rapid growth of great cities, and the general increase of wealth and luxury, difficulties of an opposite character are experienced. Here there are positive tendencies to a corruption of the public manners which no merely human power can remove. In the ordinary course of events, wealth and luxury will, as all history teaches, exert an influence over the young, taking away the motives to industry, economy, and other home-bred virtues, stimulating the more dangerous appetites and passions, educating them, in short, to anything but a useful and honorable life. This is a miasmatic influence, which no vigilance of the wealthy parent can, with certainty, keep from injuring his offspring.

#### *Influences against the Teacher.*

The general tone of society, when at variance with the influence of the conscientious teacher, is a powerful check upon the success of his efforts. Indeed, as to manners and morals, it is society chiefly that educates. The influence of the school-room is limited in respect to time. A part of each day is spent by the pupil in the family, and a part in promiscuous intercourse with others. Every child, on entering a school for the first time, carries with him a character formed elsewhere. This character is what parents and companions have made it; and being daily nourished by intercourse with these, it will be very likely to be maintained, notwithstanding the efforts of the teacher to the contrary. But suppose the teacher to be so fortunate as to gain the victory for the present. When the pupil leaves the school at the early age which is now common with us, he returns to the influences of that same society where he first drank in a poisonous atmosphere, and where, in all probability, the defeated party will retrieve its losses. A teacher may not despair even in these circumstances. He may prevent much evil. He may prepare the soil for some other persons to cultivate with better success. He may produce enough of effect to constitute a sufficient reward for his labors, though far below his wishes. He may, in many instances, make an impression on the heart which time will never efface. At any rate, having done what he could, he will share with the good of all ages in the high satisfaction of having done his duty. Still, the adult portion of the community should remember that with them mainly rests the responsibility of forming the moral character of the young. And here a distinction must be made between the legitimate sphere of domestic discipline and the more general control of public

manners. Who is to guard the morals of the young, when they are abroad and in company with such persons as they may chance to meet? How can their eyes be kept from polluting sights, and their ears from sounds freighted with immorality? Here, at some place of village resort, they see what they ought never to see, and hear words of strife, of ribaldry, and of blasphemy, which ought to be confined to dens inaccessible to childhood. Still worse is it when the streets swarm with juvenile offenders, because the sympathies of the young with each other are so strong. The vicious practices of the adults may be so viewed, where proper instruction is given, as to be repulsive, and be turned into a warning. The grosser forms of vice in adults may not be so seductive as those that are more decent. But with children associating with each other it is otherwise. Their vices are more contagious. When a child is outdone by another in wrong doing, there is a silent appeal to the courage of the former, which few have sufficient strength to resist. Children, moreover, have selfish passions. They readily listen to the recitals of a companion who describes the little arts by which he procures forbidden indulgences, escapes the vigilance of parents, and deceives them. One such companion has it in his power to corrupt the children of a whole neighbourhood; and it often happens that a group of boys form connections in practising petty vices, which exert a pernicious influence upon their character far outweighing the salutary influence exerted by parents and teachers. It may be said that if parents cannot extend their control over the morals of children generally, they can, at least, keep their own children from bad companions. This is true but in part. Children are so fond of each other's society, and so weary of the monotony of retirement, that they seize greedily upon all the incidental opportunities which present themselves for meeting with companions, making choice of associates rather than congenial tastes and feelings than from moral considerations. The greatest security will therefore be found to exist in those communities where, by various means, the youthful population are generally kept far from the contamination of vice. What may be done to repress juvenile misdemeanors, as they are now manifested too commonly in public places and in the streets, is a subject worthy of consideration. The difficulty lies chiefly with those children who are neglected by their parents, and with others who, when beyond the observation of their parents, are swayed by the example of the former. The negligence of many parents, who otherwise are good citizens, in respect to the moral training of their children, is almost unaccountable. They provide liberally for their physical wants, but leave them, as if strangely indifferent to their higher interests, to form their own moral habits and tastes. They do not apply their minds constantly and earnestly to the subject of forming their character. They neither study the principles, nor inform themselves of the best methods of training their children to wisdom and virtue. Their minds are engrossed with business, or with the demands of social life. They act as if they believed that a pecuniary provision for the present and future support of their offspring were the main part of parental obligation. But is there anything more sure to end in disaster than leaving indiscreet and inexperienced children, in whom the passions are strong and the understanding weak, to choose their own ways and their own associations? Indulgence seems to be deemed equivalent to the law of love. Appetites whose excesses are dangerous to both body and mind, are allowed to grow to exuberance. Habits that enfeeble the mind, and foster a love of luxury and indolence, are suffered to be confirmed. The filial duties of obedience and respect are not insisted on. Independence and smartness in a child, with a spice of impudence, seem to be interpreted as an omen for good. The kindness, forbearance, and acts of service, are all on one side. Pure selfishness in the child, it is supposed, will, in time, if left to itself, work its own cure. Will it be strange, if such parents in their old age should have occasion to think of the proverb, "It is easier for one parent to support seven children than for seven children to support one parent!" It will not be strange if the current of love be found by them, to their grief, to be downward, from parent to child, rather than in the opposite direction. It cannot be too deeply impressed on our minds, that generally children are, in their character what we make them. How unfortunate, then, must be the condition of those children, who are not merely neglected by their parents, but are directly and deeply injured by their pernicious example! If there are persons who neglect their own moral culture, and by indulging in wrong feelings, words, and acts, are willing to jeopard their own happiness, it would seem, that in holding the place of parents, and pouring the tide of evil upon their helpless offspring, they add cruelty to immorality. At least, they should take as much pains to hide their vices from their families as from others. Yet how unrestrained are the passions, the ill feeling, the harsh words, and unkind acts of many parents, where there are none but their young children to witness them! These are lessons that are sure to produce their effect. The imitative nature of childhood will here show itself with fearful energy.

There is one more element in the adverse influence of society, as counteracting the work of the teacher, which must be mentioned. It