

rather than its reason. If it sees that its parents, its older brothers and sisters, and their friends whom it respects, sincerely reverence the will of God, that their conduct and views of life are swayed by this reverence, that for their own sake they value the religious spirit and value those institutions and usages which promote it, it will adopt their feelings into its own soul. They may have defects and inconsistencies of character, but a child readily makes the proper discrimination. It sees, notwithstanding their defects and short-comings, what their real convictions are, and they become his. He loves what they love. He honors what they honor. Their habitual persuasions and feelings respecting life and God and duty become his. There is no need of many words. Children are more influenced by phrases than by speeches, and by life than by either. But let there be a really religious tone of faith and sentiment in those around him whom he respects, he can no more escape the influence of this social atmosphere, than a healthy tree in a congenial soil can help putting forth leaves in spring. He may have very imperfect religious opinions as compared with any scientific system of theology, his practice may fall far below his own idea of duty, but the religious sentiment will be awakened. And once thoroughly awakened, it will never be lost from the mind. There is nothing so unchangeable on earth as these early feelings and associations of the heart. In after life, *opinions* may change with every year, but the original *sentiment* survives through all changes. The man may become skeptical in faith, and yet all his days his heart, early baptized in religion, will be rising up to abjure his speculations. An absurd superstition wrought into the mind of childhood, like