

6. I plead for a recognition of the religious element for the sake of our sons. If we knew that a year hence those sons, in crossing a wide and deep river, would be suddenly plunged into its rushing current, the knowledge would change some of our plans, at least, in regard to their training. Not a day would be lost in teaching them to swim, and perhaps not satisfied with this we would provide the best life-preservers money could buy, and would have the lads carefully instructed how to use them. The illustration is none too strong. In a few years our boys will be plunged into a sea where they must swim or drown, and where nothing but fixed religious principles will suffice to keep their heads above water, and sustain them until they reach the other side. Our sons, as they go forth to life's great battle, must face the same problems and grapple with the same foes that we have had to encounter. Shall we, then, send them forth unprepared—utterly unarmed and defenceless? Oh, surely not! But will an education that is purely secular supply the needed armour of proof? Nay; nothing but "the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left" can possibly shield them in the strife. If my statements seem extravagant, listen at least to the words of Professor Huxley, whom one is almost surprised to find on this side of the question:—"There must be a moral substratum to a child's education to make it valuable, and there is no other source from which this can be obtained at all comparable to the Bible."

You may ask what difference it makes who teaches my boy chemistry, biology, anatomy, astronomy, or the like. It may make a tremendous difference, both in regard to what he is taught and how it is taught; for often the tone and spirit of a teacher go farther than the instruction he

gives in determining what a student shall become. In that most critical period of life when intellect is fairly awaking; when the youth is just becoming conscious of the mental power that has been slumbering within him; when he longs to explore new and untried regions; when he craves a wider freedom, and regards with suspicion whatever claims authority over his thoughts or actions; when he begins to regard intellectual culture as the highest possible good, and looks up to his teacher as an incarnation of wisdom, from whose *dictum* there can be no appeal; at such a time the teaching and influence of the class-room may make all the difference between moral safety and moral shipwreck.

If, for example, my boy is engaged in the study of biology, does it make no difference whether he hears from his teacher's lips that God is the only Author and Giver of life, or is told that life, so far from being a Divine gift, is only a spontaneous generation from lifeless matter? If he is studying the structure and laws of the human frame, does it make no difference whether he is taught to recognize Divine power and wisdom in the marvellous adaptation of means to ends, saying with the Psalmist, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made. . . . Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in Thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned when as yet there was none of them;" or, on the other hand, is taught to believe that he is but the product of a blind force; that he came, by some unlucky accident, from the darkness of the past, and is speeding swiftly toward the deeper darkness beyond? If he is studying the wonders of the starry universe, does it make no difference whether the instructions to which he listens be in the spirit of the Psalmist's confession,