

### The Power of Influence.

A Paper read before the Alumnae Association of Acadia Seminary, May 31, by the Retiring President, Mrs. Hattie Brough.

We live in eventful times. The words and deeds of those whose life's work ended centuries ago have been to us, in many instances, a rich heritage. The past ages have left us much that has proven to be golden grain which seems to have parted asunder the walls of its storehouse, and under the sunshine and dews of the nineteenth century made a possible earthly existence mighty, a possible heavenly harvest glorious. The influences from the lives of those whose names crowned the centuries which gave them birth, those who gave to fellowmen, to home, to country, to society, the debt due each, such influences have, like the ripples caused by the splash of the boy's oars in the quiet bay, gone rolling on and on, until they will break upon the shores of eternity. And time, life and influence go on.

The influence of the present will live on in the future ages, helping either to bring to perfection or banefully to hinder God's great plan. We touch lives to-day and there is no impression that we can see; the very memory of the act seems to fade out, but in eternity it will be manifest. So somewhere in the future ages shall we find our songs from beginning to end in the heart of other singers. Some one has said—

"Our many deeds, the thoughts that we have thought,  
They go out from us thronging every hour  
And in them all is folded up a power  
That on the earth doth move them to and fro  
And mighty are the marvels they have wrought  
In hearts we know not, and may never know."

Doubtless the home and its surrounding society are largely responsible for the influence exerted by a nation. Let us glance for a moment at the home, the cradle wherein influence germinates. Longfellow says:

"Each man's chimney is his golden milestone,  
Is the central point from which he measures  
Every distance.  
Through the gateways of the world around him,  
In his farthest wanderings still he sees it,  
Hears the talking flame, the answering night wind  
As he heard them  
When he sat with those who were, but are not."

It is trite to say that every home influence works itself into the heart of childhood, and then works itself out again in the subsequent development of the character. Homes are the real schools and universities in which men and women are trained, and fathers and mothers are the real teachers and makers of life. The poet's song is but the sweetness of a mother's love flowing out in rhythmic measure through her child's life. The lovely things men build in their days of strength are but the reproductions of the lovely thoughts that were whispered in their hearts in the days of tender youth. The artist's picture is but a touch of the mother's beauty wrought out on the canvas. A grand manhood or womanhood is only the home teachings and prayers woven into life and form. The daily religious exercises of a Christian home bring into it streams of holy influences which are wonderfully educative. Perhaps in no other way can children be so firmly "bound by golden chains about the feet of God." Hearts that are drawn together at Jesus' feet every day cannot get very far apart. Religion is love and a religious home is one in which love reigns.

The products of the printing press found in all homes aid in character building to a wonderful degree, while at the same time greatly add to the responsibilities of parents. The importance of a superior class of literature in the home, appears when we remember that everything we read leaves its impression upon the inner life and makes its enduring mark upon the character. The country is flooded with publications, oftentimes attractively prepared, elaborately illustrated, their impurity concealed under harmless titles, but in which lurks the fatal poison of moral death. As the hardening rock holds through all the centuries, every trace of even the veinings in the leaf once imbedded in its soft surface, so everything we take into our life leaves its permanent impression.

As our work here is spiritual culture we shun all those multitudes of books which live but for a day, books wherein the trivial is magnified and glorified and held up in the blaze of sensation so as to attract the gaze of the multitude and sell. We do well if we have the courage to remain ignorant of the great mass of books in the annual Nine overflow of the printing press. On our library shelves, and not above the reach of youthful hands, can be placed standard works in science, in history, in religion, in poetry, in fiction. Books which set before us grand ideals of character. The ancients were wont to place the statues of their distinguished ancestors about their homes that their children might, by contemplating them, be stimulated to imitate their noble qualities. There are great books enough to occupy all these short and busy years, and we are wise if we

avoid all but the richest and best. The same principle we apply to books we must also apply to the selection of pictures for the walls of home. Children from their earliest years are naturally fond of pictures, their eyes rest much upon them and insensibly they have much to do with the formation of their tastes and in giving moral tone and color to their minds. Every picture will touch itself into the soul of each child in the home. That which is impure or gross will leave a stain and that which is refined and lovely become a sweetening memory forever. The display of certain kinds of statuary must necessarily exert a harmful influence, especially upon the minds of the young. True, we often hear it said, "Unto the pure all things are pure," yet believing that nothing which would be indecent in actual life can be proper in art, we do not hesitate to condemn much of the so-called high art, which unfortunately fills many of the niches in the home. Just as we believe that every shadow and every beauty of the mother's character prints its image on the child's soul—that the songs sung over the cradle hide themselves away in the nooks and crannies of the tender life to sing themselves out again in the long years to come, so also must we believe that every other influence thrown around a sensitive life must be pure. Among the many influences of the home which help to develop character, might also be mentioned music, which Carlyle says is the speech of angels. Home courtesies which crown all home's adornments with lustrous beauty and early companionship.

As the home is that quiet resting place whose every influence becomes photographed upon the character of each occupant; so society performs a large part in the development of a nation. As we follow the history of the nations, century after century, we find that society customs change with the mingling of, each successive generation. We are thankful that many of those ancient customs, so demoralizing in their tendencies, have long since petrified. Yet in the gay society of to-day there figures much that savors of ancient heathenism. Here we find those who make their social duties and pleasure life's chief end, life's object; here we find those who seem to believe that the be-all and the end-all is to dress as the butterflies of fashion. It would be hard to imagine anything more icy and cold, more devoid of the sweet charities of life than much of the formal intercourse of society to-day, especially in circles of wealth and fashion. Yet, notwithstanding all this, we are moving onward in the social world, the spell of this sort of life is breaking, there is less etiquette and more reality. The present woman realizes to a large extent that life is too precious for such insincere pastimes. Life is too beautiful, too delicate, too valuable to be thus sacrificed. The special enclosure, known as "Society," grows smaller and less fascinating to the great, many-sided, world of women. It is said that in a quarry at Baalbec lies the largest wrought stone in the world, almost detached and ready for transportation; and in the ruined temple of the Sun near by is a place still empty and waiting for this stone after forty centuries. So large, so grand, it was a failure, because it never filled the place for which it was designed; and who can tell how many human lives lie among the wastes and ruins of life that God intended to fill grand places? The choicest talents have been folded away and forever they will lie in the quarries ghosts of glorious might-have-beens, while the niches in God's temple which they were meant to adorn, remain forever empty, memorials of their hopeless and irreparable failures.

He who went about doing good has given to us a truer type of society and has apportioned to each our talents to be thus used in honoring God and blessing the world. Many gifted and cultured women are devoting their God-given talents to help tear down the hideous fabric of conventional society and are building upon a better foundation a tower in which our sons and daughters may safely take refuge—where the one rule of etiquette is the Golden Rule. Our century has very little that is greater to show than the influences radiating from the unselfish life of our gracious Queen, who has given to society a nobler form than was ever known before. Such an example as hers has stamped indelibly upon the mind of the race the conception of highest duty nobly done.

Life then to each of us means great personal responsibility. Our life is not in any sense our own. Its purpose is not fulfilled unless it is lived to accomplish the end for which it was created and redeemed. Our influences will meet us again in the land beyond where it will be too late to mourn over unimproved opportunities and undeveloped possibilities. In perfecting God's great plan we are made co-workers with Him. Our life's work may not be seen and read by men, but our influences will be felt if not seen and heard. It is designed that many of us must do our part silently, without any worldly fame; yet, who does not remember the noiselessness of our Lord's human life on the earth. His wondrous power was life power, heart power, which he shed forth in silent influences among the people, but which is pulsing yet in all lands. Unheralded lives are silently building up the kingdom of heaven; their influences are blessed, and not one of them is forgotten. Not a life lived for God is useless or lost. The lowliest writes its history and leaves its impression somewhere and God will open His book at the last, and men and angels will read the record. And in heaven will come the rewards in the presence of the angels and of the Father.

"O may I join the choir invisible,  
Of those immortal dead who live again  
In minds made better by their presence; live  
In pulses stirred to generosity,  
In deeds of daring rectitude,  
In scorn for miserable aims that end in self,  
In thoughts sublime that pierce the night like stars,  
And with their mild persistence urge man's search  
To vaster issues."

### After Four Months in India.

A third of a year has past since the last mission recruits from the Baptists of the Maritime Provinces stepped on Indian soil. Thinking that the loved ones in the home land by whose genuine sympathy, earnest prayer, and Christian liberality we are being supported, might be pleased to know how their new missionaries are conducting themselves, and how they are being effected by their novel sights and sounds, and the unfriendly climate of this hot country, I lay aside my Telugu study to make a rough report. Miss Gullison and Miss Newcombe, accompanied by some of the older missionaries, are spending these hottest weeks on the hills. That they are enabled to escape the trying heat of the plains this year, we are very thankful and cannot but believe that both to them and the work ultimate good will result. They have an excellent teacher, and Mr. Morse writes that they are making rapid strides in the acquisition of the language. Mrs. Gullison and myself are perfectly well. The intense heat is enervating in the extreme, but we are plodding along in the study of Telugu, hoping that in a short time we will be able to tell the story of the Cross in the native tongue. Here are a few of my first and deepest convictions:

Conviction 1.—India's Greatness. Of these we had heard and read before coming here. But now it is burned into our souls. India is great in territory, great in natural resources, great with the teeming millions of her population, great in poverty and wretchedness; but greatest in sin. At home sin is bad enough, but here it is a monster, cruel and shameless. At home sin knows many enemies, much strong opposition and speedy defeat. Here its reign is universal and almost uninterrupted. To a Christian on-looker it appears that Hindu's endeavor to be most saintly, meets the Christian's idea of being most sinful, for their "devotees" are among the vilest, most profane and unhappy. And in them the wrath of God must surely abide. A "holy man" is a living illustration of all that is bad. The great struggling masses of the people are sorrowfully blinded with ignorance and superstition. For centuries the scales of unbelief that hide the God of love have been forming, and truly they are of their father, the devil. But their leaders are a hundred fold more the children of the devil than they. Under such leadership we are not surprised to find them all in the gutter of moral filth. Their condition is indescribable. I once told Bro. Higgins that I thought he might possibly have unconsciously overdrawn his picture of sin in India. But now I am convinced that neither Bro. Higgins nor any other man can use language too strong when depicting the works and workers of the devil as the missionary meets them in India. When my mind in this regard is changed I will inform the readers of the MESSENGER AND VISITOR. "God is not mocked," "Whatever a man soweth that shall he also reap." This divine law, so long transgressed, has brought the awful curse of God upon earth, air and water, as well as upon human nature. In a thousand ways the poor people are reaping harvests of wretchedness which have grown from the sinful seed of their wilful sowing. Here is a question that some of our friends at home have written us: "Is the famine making itself seriously felt in Madras Presidency? Are any of the people about you starving?" My answer is, yes. But we are very thankful that we are able to write that the suffering here is very slight indeed compared with what it is in other parts of India. Still we see, hear and know enough to cause our hearts to ache because we cannot do more to relieve. In this Presidency there are probably thousands who have not known what it is to enjoy one good meal a day for months. Be assured that your money given for famine relief will be put to a God-honoring use.

Conviction 2.—The gospel is not a failure in India. "It is the power of God unto salvation." True, our little mission has not yet been blessed with the thousands of converts, as many of the missions in this country have, but when we, the Baptists of the Maritime Provinces, shall have put the men, the money, and the real heart interest in our Telugu mission that we ought, then prevailing prayer will be made to God who alone can convert the heathen, and multitudes shall be gathered into the kingdom of our Lord. Even now God has given souls for our hire in proportion to manifested faith in Him and the Telugu mission. Although the number of the Christians is not large, we have among them men and women of faith, consecration, and stalwart Christian character, some of whom would put many of the home Christians to shame. When we consider the pit whence they were taken, and their natural condition before they felt the polishing and purifying touch of the Divine hand, we stand in wonder before the happy fact that out of such unpromising material diamonds have been made fit for the Master's crown. Most emphatically do we assert that our mission is by no means "a failure."

Conviction 3.—The Baptists of the Maritime Provinces

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