

activity, which may be regarded as mere fragments of influence for good, never appear and never act in vain. When we think of the momentous influence wielded by the freest and mightiest deliberative assembly that has ever congregated on the face of the globe—the Parliament of the United Kingdom—its deliberations and its acts watched and pondered from the one extremity of the civilized world to the other, and its enactments vibrating throughout all nations, we are ready to grant that no fragmentary power slumbers or rouses itself there. The wisdom, the wealth, the military prowess, the united greatness of England's name and renown, stand the guarantee of the globe-encircling influence that mutters its thunder, or whispers its beneficence there. It is no fancy. It is no poetic dream. It is no dew of the morning, sparkling and passing away. The Commons of England—the basis of her aristocracy and her crown—constitute, as on all hands admitted, one of the mightiest and most magnificent agencies in the social progress of men.

But when we have taken up that concentrated agency of a nation's will, and of a nation's power, and estimate as best we may its action for good or for evil, its elemental individualities are but men of like passions with ourselves. Some, not a few, it may be a large majority, rise by no appreciable measurement in mind or acquired attainments above the myriads that own no senatorial name. They weep if they have pain; they fear if they suffer loss; and they dread, as others do, the inevitable die. Lest any one from his senatorial seat, divest him of his place and name, relegate him to his shop or his demesne and the spell of the aggregate wisdom, and greatness, and power, is felt to have passed away. But he lives for influence still. If wealth is his, that golden-ointment clears the vision, and gives both himself and others to see with greater visual clearness; if literary attainments are his, those pinnacled couriers of thought may still go forth, and fluttering, stir the intellectual life of other men; or if tastes refined and purified in the corridors of art, or the fragrant bowers of nature, then may he still bid the eye of progress survey those glorious works of the finite or the infinite, which mirror to intelligence, the ever-to-be emulated standards of the true, the beautiful, and the good.

And so with all the associations which men have formed, in order to draw strength out of weakness. In science and in art, in agriculture and in commerce, in the business of the field and of the forum, in peace and in war, combination, when founded in laws that have their transcripts in the living thoughts and feelings of humanity, arises and urges onward with a firmer and more gigantic footstep, the progress of mankind towards the ultimate good. What a nation is, in its united energy of action, a city is, or any community, however weak and small. Association gives might to weakness, decision to hesitation, enlightenment to dim and bewildered thoughts, and a herculean movement to atoms, which, taken one by one, are feeble, insignificant, and altogether without a name.

But still, what were a general without an army? or what a monarch without his subjects? or what a leader, under any name, without the corresponding minds that move in sympathy with his own? Napoleon, without his battalions, would have traversed Europe without a trace of his being left on the national highways of time. Nicholas of all the Russias, bereft of the amalgamated millions that, through various gradations, own his sceptred hand, would be Nicholas Clay, or Nicholas Mind-in-Clay, fashed and ruled as any one else of the sons of men. The leagued oppressors, or the leagued defenders of freedom, make their leaders, as well as plastically own the might of their will. The crowning fragment of influence which seems to command and aggregate the whole, is but the offspring and impersonation of the aggregate will, that lifts it up and worships before it. And so, throughout the various forms in which the associated thoughts, sentiments, and wills of human nature arise and evince their combined existence in giving contour, expression, and aspect to the grand and predominant features of humanity. A Hampden lives, a Sidney dies; a Plato reasons, a Socrates acts; a Cesar conquers, a Virgil sings. But whether in the senate, or on the scaffold, in the academy, or the market place; on fields drenched with the gory blood of myriads, or in the secluded vistas of Italian groves, an impulse vibrates from heart to heart, and awakens, and sustains some special form of the progressive and onward thinking and feeling of humanity. The associated sentiment lives and moves; the combined conception travels onward; and its visible action appears in the life or in the death of nations.

But while the grandest actions of social life thus evince their being, and attest the energy of their march along the highway of ages, the fragmentary influence put forth by the least of the human family, is not to be contemned or idly cast away. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to find the human creature, rational, active, and sound, both in limb and in intellect, that is, an absolute passivity in the hands of others; however apparently recipient, there is some reflective influence which tells for good or for evil on the conscious life of others. Even the weakness and imbecility of infancy, which seems to be all recipient of a mother's care, and of a mother's love, reflects from even its infantile tears and smiles, an action of life and of mirth, that stirs emotions, stirred by nothing else in the universe of God.

An infant's tear! who, it may be said, stops to measure, weigh, or analyse the diluted brine that trickles from that living sparkling well? A million, or a hundred millions of such, evaporated or brushed away from the eyes of the human life-buds that are shooting up so thickly throughout this "vale of tears"—who waits to calculate the ethereal influence, moral or spiritual, that is wasted along in the odour of these dewy drops? An idle question, it may seem, in the eyes of rough or unkindly nurses. But not the less real, and not the less mighty, the influence put forth by these transitory exponents of human feeling in some of the feeblest, loveliest, and most thoughtless forms. They move the hearts, that move the hands, that move the mundane enterprises of men. Every tear is inscribed with a message of love-provoking weakness which speaks to eyes that seldom read in vain; and then, in its foreordained simplicity, it acts, in the regency of the life that now is, as nothing else could, in humanising at the very dawn of existence, our scarcely human asperities. A type this of the infinitesimal littlenesses that arise and combine in forming the great powers that rule in silence, but in certainty, the movements of human existence on the earth.

How frequently is it, however, that, in relation to the great reformatory movements, as educational, sanitary, temperance, and so forth, we find the individual abnegating his personal influence on the ground that it is so namelessly little? He views, it may be, the evil as it roots itself in the prejudices and passions of myriads or of millions. He calculates his individual strength against an accumulation of ignorance, or of vice, or of customary waywardness, that seems to have defied the corrective labors of all time, and he says within himself—an atom to the Andes—the flutter of an ephemeral insect to uproar and overturn the mountains of the Himmaleyah. And so he concludes, that unless he have faith that could remove mountains, or could alone take by their tops the giant evils that afflict and oppress human nature, and hurl them hence, he needs do nothing. Because he is not the Father of waters—the Nile or the Amazon—he is not disposed to be "a drop in the bucket;" because he cannot speak with a tongue that will make a nation hear, he will not speak with a tongue that may persuade some wayward child to refrain his foot from evil. He must either realise in himself the momentous position of doing all, or next to all, otherwise he shrinks into the moral annihilation of attempting nothing. Instead of gathering up the fragments of his influence for good, either to the intelligence or the morals of mankind, he suffers himself to become worse than a nonentity in the sphere which Providence has assigned him.

How different the lesson taught in the thriftiness of nature, or in the utterances of the Infinite Grace! Nothing is to be lost—nothing of influence is to be cast away as utterly unavailing. So that in the humblest dwelling, in the most secluded hamlet, and in the person of the most insignificant of men, there is ever to be cherished the conscious action of an influence for good. On the side of virtue let every day's activity tell. We may not knowingly reclaim a drunkard, or repress a lie, or defeat a sensual grovelling pursuit, as seen in the haunts of evil; but we may be conservative at least of virtue. We may be found husbanding that which must ultimately prevail in the conflict of the true and the false; the virtuous and the vicious; the monster sin, and the supreme rectitude. To shed a tear for misery, for that is all that one owns, is neither idle or unfruitful. To bid a fellow-weeping be of good cheer, for the day of comfort comes, is not a fruitless utterance of the breath of kindness. Or to take one's stand with the few that bid custom and folly avault, is not to be named an effectless isolation. What other tears are shed for misery, or what other cheers are given in lone dwellings elsewhere found,