

not simply that men are imitative animals, there is a deeper reason for this wide spread imitation. Man does not copy blindly or without a plan, but in accordance with deep-seated principles of his being. He is so constituted that that which is generally admired, excites within him a kindred feeling of admiration; and he is forthwith impelled as by necessity to strive after and imitate that which he has learned to admire.

I shall now ask your consideration of the fact or principle that Young Men necessarily influence their Age.

They form a large and an active part of every community. Perhaps of all the classes of which each community is composed they are the most likely to receive the impress of their time for good or for evil. If they do nothing more than reflect in their own individual characters the character of their period, then, like the mirror placed behind the Lighthouse lamp that intensifies the blaze, throwing its beams over a greatly extended surface, they increase and continue the power of those tendencies which they did not originate.

When the citizens of Athens grew in wealth they began to depart from their former simplicity of living. The youths caught the example, and not content with mere imitation they advanced as far beyond the first innovators as they had before their ancestral hardihood. Thus the Young Men intensified the evil of their time by accelerating the downward course of luxury and vice, which sunk the might of Athenian greatness and hid the lustre of Athenian genius.

Up to this point I have been engaged in setting forth general views, and no one can feel more fully than I do how meagre has been the statement of them—they have rather been hinted at than unfolded. Let us now enter on the more special investigation of what *this* Age is in relation to those who live in it.

It would be trite, indeed, to talk of this as the Age of Progress—of the rapidity with which men travel and information spreads. Yet these are great and influential facts. It is not less true that men now-a-days live too rapidly,—there is a hastening to be rich—a hastening to be wise—a hastening to be foolish—there is a break-neck race of emulation or competition in which not a few of the runners stumble.

This is peculiarly an Age of combination, of associated effort. Formerly men trusted in Heroes—in great men,—now they look for help from Joint Stock Companies or Affiliated Societies. Is there any new or great thing to be done in Church or world? then there is a gathering together of many heads and many hands, and the individual man is merged in the Society or Committee of which he is a part.

This is an age of expediency and of materialism. There is a tendency to make success the standard of excellence. Men strongly incline now-a-days to let circumstances mould their principles rather than make principles mould their circumstances.

This is an Age of great scientific attainment and of profound investigation,—yet also of the most trivial superficiality,—the few dig deep for knowledge—the many are content with a mere smattering of information.