

mentioned, was the contrivance by which she shook off the satiating dominion of repose, and arose to sit down to her lessons like a school-boy. Well may a late English writer exclaim, "it is not very probable, that we shall see in our days such *women again*."

It is a beautiful trait in her character, that after she had spent many pleasing years in the literary society of London, she cheerfully retired to her native place to take care of her aged father, who had been left alone by the marriage of his other children. To some one, who lamented the trouble it must give her, she made the following excellent reply: "It is proper I should be rather more confined at home, and I cannot be so much at the disposal of my friends as when my sister supplied my place at home. As to anything of this kind hurting the dignity of my head, I have no idea of it, even if the head were of much more consequence than I feel it to be. The true post of honor consists in the discharge of those duties, whatever they happen to be, which arise from that situation in which Providence has fixed us, and which we may be assured is the very situation best calculated for our virtue and happiness."

She closed her happy and useful career at the advanced age of eighty-eight, surrounded by numerous friends, and uninterrupted in the use of all her faculties save that of hearing, showing how little the occupations of literature, if moderately pursued, are detrimental to health. May her noble example of industry and piety be deeply impressed upon our minds, and constantly carried out in our conduct?

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#### Evil Influence of Popular Literature.

By REV. ALFRED S. PATTON.

Evil communications corrupt good manners.—PAUL.

THE morals of men, like their manners, are, to a great extent, the result of association. By an almost insensible process we assimilate, in character, to the influences by which we are surrounded; and hence the numerous proverbs, which infer the character of men from their companions, and assign to vice an insidious power to contaminate, and to virtue, the elevating and ennobling influences of truth and holiness. And as the actions of men are oftener determined by their character than their interest,—as their conduct takes its color more from their acquired taste, inclinations and habits, than from a deliberate regard to their greatest good, it becomes us constantly and assiduously, to guard against every influence that would conspire with a natural disposition to subdue the feeble forces of purity, and to employ every means that will imbue the mind with right principles and affections; the elements of character, and the masters of action. External causes however, if tending to evil, obtain such a decided advantage over virtue, in the voluntary aid of a depraved heart, that it is only by a desperate and almost deadly conflict that they can be overcome.

One of the most silent, but powerful of the influences by which we are affected is received from the printed page. Here, through the gates of vision, the pure stream of truth is poured into the secret chambers of the soul;—here the feelings are stirred, and the sympathies moved by the potent power of silent thought;—here men speak to the heart when their voice, still in death, can no longer attract the ear.

"The wise,  
Minstrel or sage, out of their books, are clay;  
But in their books, as from their graves, they rise,  
Angels—that, side by side, upon our way,  
Walk with and warn us!"

Such, however, are not the characters, nor are such the offices of the favorite and popular authors of the present day. They are, with but few exceptions, men of weak heads, and wicked hearts; intellectual dwarfs, and licentious giants; men, whose talent is only discovered in their fearful revelations of a corrupt imagination, and whose power is only felt in arousing the worst passions of the human soul.

"Hark while we muse, without the walls is heard  
The various murmur of the laboring crowd.  
How still, within those archive-cells interred,  
The calm Ones reign;—and yet they rouse the loud  
Passions and tumults of the circling world!"

Oh! they do exert a vast and most baneful influence, and the slightest familiarity with such books is one of those "*evil communications*" which tend inevitably to "*corrupt good manners*."

"Aliment," says a distinguished divine,\* "taken into the mind operates like aliment taken into the body, by *assimilation*. It is converted, as it were, into the very substance of the soul, and imparts to it, of course, its own character. We hear of the champagne, which takes the hue of whatever it looks upon. It is so, in a measure, with our minds." It is not more impossible to associate as boon companions with the profligate, and yet escape contamination, than it is to peruse habitually works of a low moral cast, and yet retain high moral purity." Many, however, profess to hold a different opinion. Dr. Johnson, in alluding to this subject has said: "Men will not become highwaymen, because Macbeth is acquitted on the stage." And yet, forgetting, apparently, this previously expressed opinion in the fourth number of his Rambler, he frankly acknowledges the corrupting tendency of familiarity with the impure. "Many writers," says he, "so mingle good and bad qualities in their principal personages, that they are both equally conspicuous; and as we accompany them through their adventures with delight, and are led by degrees to interest ourselves in their favor; we lose the abhorrence of their faults, because they do not hinder our pleasure, or perhaps regard them with some kindness, for being united with so much merit."

Nor are these evils imaginary. The convictions of personal experience, and the testimony of many painful facts concur in supporting the truthfulness of our position. Said a dying statesman, "If what I read in youth gave my mind a wrong bias, I suppose I must abide the consequence, for I cannot investigate now." This *bias*, which so gradually and insensibly effects a change in a man's principles, this generous prejudice which first tolerates, then admires, and finally embraces the most immoral and irreligious sentiments, is a tendency of which we are about to speak, and against which we would warn men.

I. THE SCEPTICAL character of our popular literature is one of its most revolting features. The history of infidelity is curious and instructive. At first, modest, it did not attempt to impugn the pure doctrine and lofty morality of the Scriptures, but simply suggested the light of nature as a valuable auxiliary. Emboldened by the success of this subtle device, the skeptics of a later day, advanced much further, and rushing into the wildest extravagances, were defeated by their own weapons, and mortified in witnessing the self-destroying tendency of their mischievous principles. Learning wisdom from past misfortunes, the infidels of the present day have given a new direction to their efforts, by investing their impious notions in a more pleasing and attractive garb. Instead of the naked, shrivelled, skeleton features of atheism, we are now invited to look upon a more lovely form. Instead of bold and open assault, we are now called upon to encounter that "*sleight of men and cunning craftiness*, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." Having discovered that their nostrum is too bitter when taken alone, they now administer it with what is sweet, and agreeable to the most fastidious taste. In other words—the opponents of religion, by a most dexterous sophistry, endeavour to give a sprinkling of infidelity to all their literary productions, and thus aim to revolutionize the morals, and engross the formation of the public mind.

This was the cunning device of Hume and Gibbon, who contrived, most artfully, to blend their false philosophy with historical facts; and thus, by the basest insinuations, assail the religious belief of the unguarded reader; or by sneers and slight misrepresentations, mislead, and fatally delude the honest, but superficial student of history.

The lighter effusions of Pope, Shelly, and Byron, were prompted by the same desire, and consecrated to the same unholy purpose. Their splendid talents, and rich intellectual en-

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