

had caught hold of the thread which could guide him through the labyrinth of the universe."

Now what is to be done to call forth and foster such a spirit in the young—the spirit of calm reflection, of patient thought, whatever be the object or subject presented to them? We can conceive nothing better fitted, for the accomplishment of this end, than to encourage them diligently and perseveringly to inquire into the reasons of things, and to follow out these reasons in all their bearings and relations. We do not mean by this remark that the young are to be encouraged to ask at their superiors in endowments or attainments the solution of their difficulties, or the answer of any puzzling question that may present itself. This course would undoubtedly impart information or knowledge, but it would not exercise, and by consequence would not strengthen, the faculty under consideration. It is, then, to urge them to the cultivation of this spirit by a firm yet humble reliance on their own intelligence and patient investigation. The discoveries or explanations of others may oftentimes be needed and prove of no ordinary value, but their greatest service is to induce the young themselves to prosecute their inquiries with more ardour, confidence and steadiness. And does not this, after all, constitute the master-function of the Educator of the young, not to pour in knowledge, however useful, but so to impart it as that all their powers, and this among the rest, shall be duly exercised and developed and strengthened.

#### MORAL EDUCATION—CONSCIENCE, ITS CULTIVATION AND DEVELOPMENT.

In a preceding number, we presented an outline of this important subject. We resume the theme and proceed to a more minute discussion of its various parts. And the first point to which we would solicit the attention of our readers is the law by which conscience, or the moral sense, is governed, and how it is to be cultivated and developed and strengthened. Upon this the whole fabric of moral education rests, and, therefore, it demands the most grave and earnest consideration.

That man is a moral being, that is, that he is capable of discerning the moral quality of actions, is a doctrine that few, if any, deny. Differences of view have oftentimes obtained and controversies waged as to what this power really is, and as to the designation to which it is most appropriately entitled; but the fact that man possesses such a power, or capacity, seems universally admitted. Not that this principle exists with equal force or power in all, or that all men discover the moral quality of actions with equal accuracy, any more than that they all see with equal distinctness. But what is maintained is, that all men perceive it in some actions; and that there is a multitude of cases, in which their perceptions of it will be found universally to agree. And over and above all, this sense or faculty is inherently simple and cannot be resolved into any other. It is also distinct from every other, making us acquainted with the existence of a distinct and separate quality of an action, whether performed by ourselves or by others. Why, then, should there exist such a reluctance to give it a separate designation? But we dwell not on this topic. Neither do we touch on the authority of this vicegerent of divinity within—an authority which from its very nature

is lordly and supreme. It is more to our purpose that we direct our thoughts for a little to the various ingredients or component parts of this all-powerful impulse.

Now in judging of any action before it is performed, whether by ourselves or by others, we are conscious of certain qualities which characterize it, and its morality among the rest. We may perceive it to be gratifying or self-denying, courteous or uncivil, in favour of or against our interest; but, in addition to one or other of these characteristics, we may also perceive it to be either right or wrong, morally good or morally evil. And this perception is very properly designated the *discriminative* of conscience.

But, besides this power, we may readily observe a distinct impulse to do that which we conceive to be right, and to leave undone that which we conceive to be wrong. This impulse we express by the words *ought* and *ought not*. Thus we say, it is right to tell the truth, and I ought to tell it. It is wrong to tell a lie, and I ought not to tell it. *Ought* and *ought not* seems to convey the abstract idea of right and wrong, together with the other notion of impulsion to do, or not to do, a particular action. And this, again, is called the *impulsive* of conscience.

Another quality of this monitor is the sensation of pleasure or pain felt when we comply with or resist its dictates. If we have obeyed the impulses of conscience and resisted successfully the influences at variance with it, we will be conscious of a feeling of innocence, of self-approbation, of desert, of reward. If the action has been done by another, we will feel towards him a sentiment of respect, of moral approbation, and a desire to see him rewarded. And if, on the contrary, we, or our fellows, pursue a different line of conduct, our emotions will be exactly the reverse. And this other ingredient of conscience is called the *emotional*.

So much for the nature of conscience. Let us now inquire how this moral sensibility of man is cultivated and enlarged, and thereby rendered subservient to the great end of its being. And here there is no difficulty. Conscience, like all the other organs and powers and energies of our nature, is strengthened by use and impaired by disuse. It is so with the body. Its nutritive, its supporting, its locomotive and its nervous systems of organs;—all these are increased in size, obtain solidity and strength, and discharge their respective functions entirely by exercise,—continued and appropriate and persevering exercise.

It is so also with the Intellect. Look at its faculties, Perception, Consciousness, Original Suggestion, Abstraction, Memory, Reasoning, Imagination; are not all these awakened and bestirred, expanded and developed, by use, by being brought in contact with objects or subjects, congenial to their respective natures and tendencies, and unceasingly and perseveringly plied therewith. And as it is with the body and intellect, so is it with conscience, it is improved by use, by harkening to its monitions and obeying its dictates.

Its *discriminating* power is strengthened by reflecting on the moral character of our actions, both before and after we have performed them, as well as by meditating on characters of pre-eminent excellence. Hence the benefit arising from the perusal of books, on biography and history, and hence too the reason of the Bible dealing so profusely in this style of composition.

Its *impulsive* power is also greatly improved by use. Every time we obey the impulses of conscience and resist the im-