

pavements, and are conducting themselves with that freedom and naturalness proper to the juvenile human being when emancipated, for a season, from the restraint of the Public School-room. They shout, they run about, play games, engage in mimic combats, indulge in lively dialogue. If we observe and listen, we shall get clearer and more correct notions of what they really are than by much watching beside the teacher's desk, or even by vigils within the privacy of the children's homes, where, also, spontaneity of speech and action is under restraint.

I confess I would rather the reader did this for himself than would I describe what, during the past year or so, I have learned by doing it here in New York. I did not have to go out of my way to get information; rather, at certain hours, it is difficult to find a retreat where the information is not thrust upon one. It is on earth and in air, it rushes at the ears and eyes, and permeates space generally. The children are not reticent; what is in them is let forth with liberality and explicitness. And what is it that these our children let out? The majority of them are well dressed and well-conditioned, their parents are of the better class, and evidently expect their offspring to take a respectable place in the community. Well, we hear as much slovenly, profane, and sometimes even foul, language as might be met with in the city slums; and we see vulgar, mean, petty conduct enough to suit the language. To look and listen, with our eyes shut, you would think that not one children of our solid citizens, who must presently carry on the business of the Republic, but a lot of naughty little toughs and hoodlums were on the rampage. The words and phrases sometimes used by these small people are really unproductive on respectable pages, and the tone in which they are uttered is yet more sig-

nificant than the words. Their games are not conducted on principles of fair play, honest give-and take; but the participants bully and take advantage of one another. One almost never sees a square stand-up fight, but the usage is to hit in the back and run away. In their disputes, they give one another the lie as a matter of course, and are neither shamed nor do they expect to shame by it. The little girls are outwardly more decent than the boys, but they nevertheless betray a certain vulgarity which is not of good augury for their future. Their poor little airs and graces, their fluent slang, their precocious flirtations—how sorry one is to see them! Now, all these children "know better." They act in this way because it is the fashion, and they prefer to adopt as models waifs of the streets rather than respectable people. So that it is no exaggeration to say that the whole school gravitates toward the level of the most disreputable little scallawag in it, or that they can pick up in the street outside. I am not overdrawing the case; it could not be overdrawn—in print. And, when the poor little things go home, they add hypocrisy to their other accomplishments, and modify their speech and actions to suit the conception which their parents have formed of what their children ought to be. Therefore, each parent believes that, however bad other children may be, his own are all right, and since, according to our Christian standards, no parent is concerned for the welfare of any but his own children, improvement is impossible.

Are the children to blame? Certainly not. Children are imitative, and it is the foible of human nature, mature and immature alike, to imitate what is evil rather than what is good. It is easier to lie down than to stand erect, morally as well as physically. Boys, if left to themselves, feel a certain pride in being "tough"; they