

has existed concerning the theory of conscience—some holding the doctrine that it is a part of our original constitution, and others that it is the result of education. Now, to a careful reader of the Classics nothing is more obvious than the use of terms expressive of moral distinctions—distinctions founded, not upon legislation nor upon established custom, but referring to something absolute and immutable above and beyond man. They perceived these distinctions and felt and obeyed the impulses of conscience, though at variance with the examples of the deities whom they worshiped. Their gods were monsters of wickedness; but vice, armed with their authority, “found in the heart of man a moral instinct to repel her. The continence of Xenocrates was admired by those who celebrated the debaucheries of Jupiter. The chaste Lucretia adored the unchaste Venus.” These examples afford an illustration of the following passage, written by an inspired apostle: For when the Gentiles, which have not the law are a law unto themselves, which show the work of the law written in their hearts.”

The best method of teaching youth morality, is not by arguments, rules, and demonstrations, but by examples, by sentiments that ennoble and elevate the heart. Such examples, we have already stated, are to be found in the Classics. Socrates was patient and forbearing, ardently devoted to the best interests of his fellow-men, according to the light he enjoyed; Xenophon was an example of modesty; and Plato, who acquired the epithet divine, displayed as much humility as many of his philosophic successors. Among the Romans, we have the simple republican manners of Cincinnatus, the unshaken constancy of Fabricius, the self-denying patriotism of Regulus, and the stern virtue of Cato denouncing the luxury and stemming the corruption of his age. These examples come down to us venerable by their antiquity, and on that account more efficacious. The examples of virtue among the moderns are so near to us and so much more familiar, that we are liable to look upon them in connection with their vices. Examples, that are constantly occurring around us, may be equally brilliant; but, like the light of the sun, which immediately surrounds us, they are obscured by floating dust, whereas, if we look to a distance, the particles of dust disappear, and we see, or we imagine that we see, the pure, unadulterated beam. Here, as in natural scenery, “distance lends enchantment to the view.”

From examples it would be interesting to turn to the moral precepts transmitted to us in the Classics—precepts referring to civil, social, and religious duties. But we will omit these for the consideration of a more important point, at least a point of greater practical importance to the present age.

Classical studies furnish an antidote against the materialistic and materializing philosophy of the present day, promoted by a too exclusive devotion to the Natural Sciences, and thus indirectly aid the causes of morality and religion. Certain scientists are loud in their demand for *things* instead of *words*, as if words, and the ideas which they represent, were not things, and the most permanent things. The temples and sphinxes of Egypt are dumb, and leave us in ignorance of the past; but her hieroglyphics speak; her recorded words are the expositors of her antiquities.

This materialistic philosophy sees nothing practical nor useful, except in ores and metals, cubes and squares, gases and imponderable agents. It has a good representative in

“Mammon, the least erected spirit that fell
From heaven: for even in heaven his looks and thoughts
Were always downwards bent; admiring more
The riches of heaven's pavement, trodden gold,
Than aught divine or holy else, enjoy'd
In vision beatific.”

And with great skill does the poet make him the leader of the fallen angels to “a hill” from which they “dug out ribs of gold.”

Low utilitarianism is always thinking about digging gold; and it would convert every thing into a spade or pickaxe for that purpose. Such a one-sided and groveling philosophy must be opposed by one more comprehensive, elevated, and spiritual; and one of the best auxiliaries to such a philosophy is a broad classical culture. Men must be taught that whatever awakens noble thoughts and influences the heart for good is useful and practical; that the most necessary branches of knowledge are not, on that account, the most intrinsically valuable. Iron is used in a greater variety of ways than gold: it is more useful, but does not have more intrinsic value. Cotton is more generally used than silk: it is more useful, but it is not more valuable. Charcoal is more in demand than diamonds; but diamonds are more precious. We live in a world in which labor is required to feed and clothe ourselves, and for this purpose acquaintance with certain branches of sciences is necessary; but those branches, though of necessity more generally studied than others, are not higher in the scale of dignity: they are not of more intrinsic value. Arithmetic is not higher than Calculus; Geography than Astronomy; nor chemistry than Metaphysics and Moral Philosophy. House-and-sign painting is not equal in dignity to landscape painting; nor is the study of Botany so elevated a walk of mind as that of language or poetry. Every one, of course, can not be expected to study Latin and Greek, the higher Mathematics and Metaphysics, literary criticism and poetry; but they are not, on that account, to be considered useless and unworthy of the attention of the human mind; and it must not be imagined that other things, that relate more immediately to our present wants, can be substituted for them, and equally accomplish the same ends. This is the fanatical raving of a short-sighted, purblind philosophy, which can see neither beauty nor excellence in any thing that lies beyond the narrow circle that it has marked out for itself. Its views are all directed to some particular result, and with such intensity that it can see nothing else. It is wedded to a single idea, and all other ideas are discarded, out of respect to its favorite one.

The devotees of such a philosophy say, with Bacon, we want fruit: the object of all philosophy is fruit. Bacon did not mean, by fruit, crab-apples alone, nor pears nor peaches alone; but he meant all the rich variety that nature yields. Without figure, he meant all the legitimate results of literary research and intellectual faculties are designed to produce. In the estimation of that philosopher, Bread-and-Butter Sciences, as they are styled by the Germans, are not the only useful sciences. “Man doth not live by bread only.”

Vivere

Non esse solum vesci aethere,
Sed laude virtutisque fructu
Egregiam satiare mentem.

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