

WHAT WILL THE BOY BECOME?

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VICTOR Hugo in his *Les Travailleurs de la Mer* depicts a man hand to hand with destiny—alone on a wide, wide sea—"a dark coalition of forces," an "immense animosity" surrounding him. We witness the unequal warfare he wages with the "silent inclemency of phenomena going their own," and the great general law implacable and passive, and discover that "a conspiracy of the indifference of things" is against him.

We perceive that such is life, but very indefinitely comprehended.

The accident of nationality, the implacable law of heredity, the Chinese wall of environment, the meanness of opportunity, all conspire against the individual in the battle of life. What with the mysterious tendency toward degeneration, the *humanum est errare* that drags us down, it is a miracle that we

"Move upward working out the beast,
And let the ape and tiger die."

What is this conservative force? Mr. Herbert Spencer tells us that it is the silent working of the Law of Conformity to Type. "It is necessity that character must harmonize with the floating rationality which is in the air of the age."

Ask a citizen of this republic why American children are regarded as "beastly American brats," and he would probably say "it was the result of the American character." So it is; but not in the unaccountable, irresponsible way in which he would have you to apprehend. He takes the view that his "young hopeful" is a *lusus accidentium*; not the inevitable consequence of his antecedents in the past—an hereditary bondsman to his father's frail-

ties; not the victim of an environment that perhaps sentences to death all the finer impulses of his soul; not the innocent cast on the shore of existence in a state of entire, intellectual helplessness and inertia, dependent on parental energy and influence to unfold. Oh, no! his short views comprehend no biological truths as stupendous as these. To him the meaning is vague, and he does not comprehend that "national character is but a name for a collection of habits more or less universal." Ask the American mother, and she would reply with an air of *laissez-faire*, "Oh, it will come all right with education!"

Let us take a consensus of opinion on this subject, beginning with Mr. Spencer, who is "foremost in the files of men." He says: "The moralizing effect of intellectual culture, flatly contradicted by facts, is absurd *a priori*. What imaginable connection is there between the learning that certain clusters of marks on paper stand for certain words, and the getting of a higher sense of duty? What possible effect can acquirement of facility in making written signs of sounds have in strengthening the desire to do right? How does knowledge of the multiplication table so increase the sympathies as to restrain the tendency to trespass against fellow creatures? In what way can the attainment of accuracy in spelling and parsing make the sentiment of justice more powerful than it was? Or why from stories of geographical information perseveringly gained is there likely to come increased regard for truth?"

And George Eliot, "After all our psychological teaching, and in the