

THE FORCE OF EXAMPLE.

“**M**AN is influenced by his surroundings.” This fact we cannot deny; even literature and science confirm it. If we glance over the literature of the past we find that during every period of our language, our English writers have been influenced by the condition of the country at the time they wrote. Round every great historical event, such as the Reformation, or French Revolution, we find gathered a great deal of literature. So in science we find men actuated by the deeds of those around them to surpass, if possible, latest scientific discoveries. But coming to the events of every day life we find simpler proof of this fact; we must all confess that in order to make life enjoyable, we are, to a certain extent, dependent on one another, we are at times compelled to imitate the example of some friend, or to look to one another for advice. Hardly any one is so self-willed as to discard every advice or plan, except that which he himself has originated. Though some think it beneath their dignity to follow, in any way, the example of those around them, yet, even such persons unconsciously are led by others to do acts which, not likely, they themselves would ever have thought of, had they been shut away from the sight of any human being.

From infancy we are led by example to adopt the habits and customs of those around us. A child before being able to speak is led instinctively to certain actions, but the very first steps in that child's education are molded through the teaching and example of the mother, or those in whose care it is placed. If a child of civilized parents were placed on one of the barbarous islands of the far off Pacific, and brought up by the natives there, is it unlikely to suppose it would grow up as those natives? And coming along down through man's career from childhood to old age, we find no period when a person is not inclined, to some extent at least, to follow the example set down by some companion with whom he may have frequent intercourse. No doubt this inclination gradually decreases as a person proceeds from youth to manhood. The youthful mind is naturally led to follow the precepts of those who are older. Hence the necessity of good example before those who are younger than we. Good example is a duty we owe to our country, as well as to our God. What constitutes man with all the wisdom and facilities which he is capable of possessing? Is it not owing, to a great extent, to the proper training he has received during his youth? Why are we what we are? Why are we a Christian community? Is it not, in many cases, owing to the fact, that our fore-fathers were such? Did not their example and character mould us thus? Yes, no doubt many are indebted to kind friends for the example they set before them in early youth. And that man who has, in his youth, been surrounded by bad example, and who has succeeded in shunning the effects of such, is a credit to himself and the community to which

he belongs, for, how often the habits of parents follow their children. When we come to the period of manhood, we find the same tendency to copy, to imitate; that faculty which was so particularly marked in the ancient Celts, a race from whom let us claim descent. And that faculty of imitating the example of others we must accept; all our life is governed by precepts and laws previously laid down by others, and so perfect have all the different departments of life become that there is left hardly any room to originate anything new, and if a man starts out on something which he fancies new in thought, he is likely to fall into the track of some one who has gone before.

But example has not so much to do with our mental life as our physical. The care of the body is the principal concern of most men, and in this matter we are guided by example. Every man sees for himself what occupation or mode of life would be likely to be most suitable for him, and then adopts that course, seeing that such has proved a success with others. We are living in a time when people look more to the effect produced by any cause, than to the cause itself, and we generally find that any cause that produces a good effect has plenty of followers. Our Christian Religion progresses owing to the effect it produces on its followers, and once people become convinced of the fact that the effect is a good one, once they see the good example of its followers, they become persuaded to join our ranks. So in any department of life, people will follow any good example when they see the effect likely to follow, and on the good example of the members of any Christian society depends the success of that society. And people are so liable to judge all by the failure of a few that it necessitates strict regard on the part of every member to the rules of the society to which he belongs. It may be said, and it is, perhaps, true, that the reason we have so many sceptics in the world at the present day is, because people judge that if every man belonging to a religious sect, does not do his duty, therefore all are alike. This, however, is a wrong idea; there may be good and bad in every flock, and because one man does not do his duty, it does not follow that all are alike.

We see then that man from the cradle to the grave is led by teaching and example to adopt measures most beneficial for his own good. But what is teaching without example? A man may be a teacher or a preacher either, all the days of his life and yet accomplish very little, if he fails to show, by his example, the effect of such teaching on himself. A man must, in all cases, walk in accordance with his profession, if he expects to prosper; if he be a minister of the Gospel, he must walk as becometh a man of that profession. A man in any public position in life must first win the confidence of the people with whom he has to deal, before his voice will have effect in swaying them according to his wishes, and he