

A PHASE OF STUDENT LIFE.

In every walk of life men are influenced by their surroundings. "Mountains make men," although a hackneyed phrase, expresses a universal principle—a principle applicable to the relation not only of physical, but also of intellectual conditions to the development of character. While it cannot be denied that in many cases, men have arisen who were superior to their environment, yet it must be admitted that the number is limited and comprises merely those who were native-born geniuses—men who have broadened the plane of possible experience for their successors.

In no case are the surroundings so intense as those in which a student is placed. Influences converge to him from every quarter. The marvels and wonders of past centuries are to him but commonplaces in the role of the ever-advancing march of science; but they appeal with no less mighty force to the youthful aspirant in moulding his decisions in regard to the burning and ever-recurring questions of life. Placed in such an observatory, where it is his to grasp the thoughts and longings of the present and to compare them with the noblest aspirations and the most potent lessons of the past, it is impossible that his character should not form with exceeding rapidity, and that the rhythm of his future career should not be largely determined by the influences of college life.

One question at least he will have forever settled—the existence of the unattainable. How delighted is the opinionative freshman—"how pleased at first the towering alps he tries"—as he enters the university, doubtful whether he can be taught anything, or at least confident that he will have attained the goal of all knowledge when he shall have received his degree! He knows the *fact* that the earth is round, but it has never occurred to him that the lapping of the placid water against the shores of his native land, is the greeting of another continent. But as his horizon enlarges, and snow-capped heights unknown to him raise their misty summits, what changed feelings characterize his meditative moods! He has now made the astounding discovery that the present is not the only century, but that its grand and glorious achievements have only been gained by the toils and experiences of preceding ages. Perchance it has dawned upon him, as a meteor out of darkness, that all creeds are not contained within

the lids of his shorter, nor even of his longer, catechism, and that it will be necessary for him to shape his beliefs according to a less dogmatic basis. In fact, he has learned the salutary lesson that the bounds of knowledge are to him relatively infinite; and, although chagrined at the thought, his sadness is not unmingled with a degree of satisfaction that he has attained his present position. But to the real student such satisfaction is evanescent. Another glance at the heights above discovers golden laurels of which a monarch might be proud. With a leave-taking adieu to the many inviting avenues, he chooses that one which will be most likely to insure success.

But the vocation he adopts, and the feelings he entertains towards his contemporaries will depend largely upon the influences with which he has dallied during college life; for although the object of higher education is invariably to train the mind to comprehensive thought, and to divest it of the unbecoming yoke of bigotry, it is no less certain that this desirable end is often frustrated. The average graduate is too often a one-sided man. This one has noted each fact in the prescribed textbooks, and has made a good mark, but failing to acquire any taste for learning, he soon relinquishes his air-castles of brighter days in the future, and degenerates to his former illiteracy. Another acquires a passion for some hobby which renders his life no less useless than disgusting. Unlike the true devotee of pure science who, although to a certain extent secluded from the rest of the world, is ever rewarded with positive results, and who is ever mindful to hang out the beacon-light of truth to wrestling humanity; he is ever pursuing bubbles which elude his grasp and vanish into nothingness. These instances will serve to illustrate a diversity, the causes of which it were a toilsome task to investigate.

But the key to this problem will evidently be found in the tendencies of human nature which have failed to be counteracted. Students are often so confident as to what courses of study will be beneficial to them, while in fact they are only consulting their own likes and dislikes, that any overshadowing influence fails to affect them. It is thus necessary that the prevailing sentiment of a university should be marked and penetrating—so much so that it shall over-awe any disastrous results—even to the fatalism of "the marking system"—which might accrue from the necessary machinery. To maintain such a sentiment, it is to those who