ETHICS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649578009

Ethics for Young People by C. C. Everett

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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BY

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BOSTON
GINN AND COMPANY
1893

The Athenæum Press
GINN & COMPANY, BOSTON, U.S.A.

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CHAPTER I.

THE RELATION OF ETHICS TO OTHER STUDIES.

ETHICS is the science of morality. By science is here meant the systematic treatment of any object of study.

Ethics is called a science, because it presents the principles of morality in a systematic form, and seeks to find the basis upon which they rest.

A comparison with other departments of study may make more clear the nature of the subjects of which Ethics treats.

There are three kinds of science.

There are in the first place *the sciences that treat of facts*, of their relations to one another, and of the laws that govern them. It is to these that the name science is more commonly given.

These sciences have to do with facts past and future as well as present.

Geology pictures to us the state of the earth long ages ago, and astronomy, that of the heavens. The astronomer can also foretell the position of the planets at any moment in the future, if he cares to make the calculation; and the geologist can foretell the future of the world, though with less exactness as to time.

To these sciences one thing is as important as another if it illustrates the working of a general law. The insect, the dust that fills the air, in a word, anything may be an object of study.

You would hardly believe, for instance, how much the frog has contributed to the knowledge of the world.

The web of the frog's foot is so thin and transparent that under the microscope the blood can be seen moving. Looked at in this way the blood is perceived to be not a mere fluid. You can see what look like circular discs borne along something like the cakes of ice that are carried by a stream in a freshet. In this way the student of anatomy can learn in a moment more about the circulation of the blood than can be taught in any other way in a much longer time. Moreover, what he sees he *knows* as he does not know what is merely told him, just as, though you may have learned in books about the hippopotamus, for instance, the sight of one first gives you real knowledge about it.

Further, Professor Frog is not merely a teacher, he is a discoverer. The changes seen in the blood when the web of the foot is inflamed, taught more in regard to the nature of inflammation than had ever been known before.

Through the frog, galvanism was discovered. Galvani, an Italian, noticed that the leg of a dead frog that was being prepared for the table twitched violently under certain circumstances. This observation led to examination and experiment, and, as I just said, galvanism was discovered.

In addition to all this, so much has been learned from the frog in relation to the nervous system, that it would take almost a book by itself to describe it.

Let any boy think of all this when he is tempted to throw a stone at a frog, and ask himself whether he is likely ever to do so much good as frogs have done.

You probably know how Franklin discovered that the lightning is a form of electricity by flying a kite in a thunderstorm. I remind you of these things to show that there is nothing so trivial that it may not have an interest for science.

It would be a good plan for all boys and girls to study some science, so that they could understand and take an interest in flowers or rocks, or some other natural objects. Then, wherever they went, they would find something to occupy their minds. They would learn to keep their eyes open, so that they would see in the world a thousand things that they would never have dreamed of otherwise.

I repeat that what is commonly called "science" treats of facts, and that all sorts of facts are important to it.