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TOWNSEND PRIZE ESSAYS.

[The history of the Townsend Premium is well known to most of our readers. A copy of the Instrument containing the grant, with its acceptance by the College, was inserted in the Magazine in August last. In the same number were inserted also five Prize Essays, the first fruits of the Fund. We now give place to the successful Essays of the present year. These were publicly read in the College Chapel, on Wednesday, June 4th. Having thus far excited an equal amount of interest with the former, they are doubtless equally fitted to add to the credit of the Yale Literary Magazine.—Ed.]

ELEMENTS OF POWER IN THE AUTHOR.

BY GUY BIGLOW DAY, COLCHESTER, CONN.

THERE are in every art a few leading principles on which every thing hinges; and when these are searched out, and held up distinctly to view, we have the secret clew by which to unravel the entire subject. Whatever be our object of pursuit, it is the part of wisdom to fix these principles clearly in the mind, and they will become as beacon lights to guide us to distinction in the pursuit of that object.

It will be our present purpose to apply these remarks to the author, and examine some of the elements on which his power mainly depends.

The whole aim of the author is to influence mind, either through the passions or the reason; and only so far as he accomplishes this, are his powers exerted to any purpose. He may gratify the imagination or please the fancy, but he has only beset the outer walls of the fort, while the man himself remains unmoved. And not until he has brought some weapon to bear upon the very seat of power within, has he in any measure compassed his end. To the student it is a question of no idle curiosity, wherein does this power consist?

Doubtless the main point is to secure and retain the attention. For though truth after truth flash with lightning rapidity and brilliancy, if they fall upon a mind heedless and indifferent, they will be powerless as the puny blows of the infant. On the other hand, though couched

in the most homely phrase, if our minds are alive and active, ready to grasp at and weigh every truth with which they meet, they will be moved—molded by the power of that truth. Our very souls will be imbued with the sentiments of the author, and our spirits will partake of his spirit.

The first element of power in the writer which we shall mention, is *a thorough knowledge of human nature*; embracing not merely an acquaintance with man as a being of feelings and passions, but a deep insight into his intellectual faculties, and the laws that regulate mind. This is peculiarly the field in which he is to labor:—these the materials to be wrought upon. As well might a physician attempt to prescribe for the bodies of men, while totally ignorant of their nature and functions, as for the writer to conceive of success, while unacquainted with that endlessly varied and indescribable machine, the human soul.

For this knowledge he may pore over books in vain. He may trace the past history of man, and follow out all the secret motives by which he has been influenced, and it is not enough. He may then shut himself up in the depths of solitude, and reflect upon the nature and operations of his own mind, and it will not suffice. But to be master of this science, he must have accustomed himself to mingle with the world from the first dawns of reason. He must have watched, narrowly and attentively, the workings of mind upon mind, in the unaffected years of childhood, and traced its changes and secret movements from thence, through the period of youth, to manly age. Here he must pause and ponder upon its mysterious operations,—then observe it again with microscopic accuracy, and again pause and reflect. This is one of those intricate sciences, that never can be taught, but is to be acquired only by long, patient, and nice observations, taken in the daily intercourse of man with man, when the subject of our scrutiny least of all suspects that his movements are watched.

The man who passes through the world with averted eye, or buried amid his own private musings, can never make the powerful writer, however profound or metaphysical his productions may prove him to be. To convince the understanding, or obtain the assent of minds kindred to his own, he may be qualified; but to go out into the broad field of the world, and move and act upon the mass of mankind, never. But he who learns a lesson from every countenance that meets his eye, and suffers no act of his fellow-men to come under his notice, without unveiling the human heart, and discovering the curious machinery of motives that produced it, gets into his possession a key that will unlock that heart; and when necessity requires, he can enter in and control it at his will.

He who would reach the centre of action in man, must learn to enter with him into the sanctuary of his own private feelings and sympathies, and there pull upon those strings that centre only upon self, and thence vibrate back to the world without. He must acquaint himself with the peculiar characteristics and preferences of different classes of men, and be ready to yield to their scruples and humor their inclinations. And when this is done skillfully, and without apparent design, resolute

indeed must that heart be, that remains uninfluenced. It has lost its kin to the human race.

Another element of power is *originality*. The world of thought is nothing less than infinite, both in extent and variety. It is therefore not in the power of finite minds to exhaust this fountain. Ages have already been spent in drawing from it, yet, like the rock in the wilderness, when struck by the rod of genius, it gives forth its streams richly as at the first. Ages more may make their demands upon it, but it will be infinite still.

This characteristic in a writer appeals directly to the strong passion for novelty in the human breast, and thus arouses effectually the slumbering energies of the mind, and renders it capable of being wrought upon. While others encumber their productions with the dross gathered from a hundred pens, the original writer brings up from the deep mines of thought, ores pure and bright, glittering here and there with some more precious gem. Many shrink from the task of working these mines for themselves, but all love to enjoy the fruits of another's toil.

Originality of thought adds to the author's power also, by increasing our respect and admiration for him. This influence is of a tacit nature, but none the less real. We take pleasure in contemplating the creations of mind, whether as exhibited in the inventions of the intellectual or physical world. And in proportion as we find a man capable of producing these creations, his influence over us is increased. To such a man we almost involuntarily yield our confidence, and suffer our minds to be governed and modified by his power. Originality would seem to be the natural aliment of the mind, affording a gratification to which none are insensible. He, then, who hopes to be successful in impressing truth upon the mind, must add this to the list of his qualifications, though labor and self-denial be the cost of its purchase.

The third element of power that demands our notice, is *common sense*. Some may smile to see this classed among the qualifications of a *powerful* writer; but we regard it as yielding to none in point of importance, inasmuch as there can be no power over ordinary minds without it. A man may possess all the profundity of a Locke, and the originality of a Bacon, united with the imagination of a Dante; yet if he be wanting in plain common sense, he will be destitute of the only link that can bind him to common minds. Attach what importance we will to native genius, wit, and eccentricity, they are all but poor equivalents for this seemingly cheap, yet indispensable element. As thought follows thought in the most natural yet attractive style, we think any one could have written the same; yet we are constrained to acknowledge that there is an appropriateness and an actual power in every sentence, for which we are unable to account.

Those in all ages who have been most successful in imparting truth, are the men whose productions have partaken most largely of this character. They are plain, practical men; yet their writings have lived, and will continue to live and be cherished, in the hearts of *'the people.'* Among this class our own Franklin occupies a conspicuous place. And analyze where we will the productions of those authors

who have had the most to do in molding the character of a community, we shall find this a prominent feature. Others may gain admiration by bold figures and lofty conceptions, or charm by elegant comparisons and glowing descriptions; but it is left for these alone to make all bow assent to their opinions.

Common sense is to the author a regulating power, guarding him against every extreme. If he is deep and original, it delivers him from that blind and incomprehensible style that only tends to mislead and bewilder. If possessed of an exuberant imagination, it checks those fancy flights and wild speculations, which otherwise would bring both subject and author into ridicule and contempt. The man who is destitute of this quality can have no more power over the empire of mind, than the feeble insect to move the rock on which it crawls. But in proportion as it predominates, power is increased, till we come to that class of writers over whose productions this faculty sits as a presiding genius, and every sentence they pen finds a ready response in the human heart. By such the mind loves to be influenced. It feels none of that wounded pride consequent upon yielding to usurped superiority; for the writer comes down to a level with our own capacities, and seems to mingle his sympathies with ours. Access is thus gained to the heart, the secret springs are touched, and the will easily brought to yield.

We have dwelt thus long on this point, because so many, and especially young writers, are prone to seek after abstruse phrases and high-sounding words, at the expense of perspicuity and precision. If the object be to influence the mind, then all must allow that a single thought, clearly and forcibly expressed, is worth volumes of vague and floating conceptions, but half formed in the mind of the author, and still less understood by the reader. For what influence can truth have upon the mind, unless that truth be distinctly comprehended?

These are not to be regarded as the only qualifications of an author, but as some of the more prominent. They constitute the fundamental elements in every powerful writer; and when each of these is duly developed, others are seldom wanting. Take one of them away, and the symmetry of the fabric is destroyed. There may still be left the wreck of a great mind, but its deformity renders it hideous, and robs it of the power it might otherwise have possessed. This is what constitutes the difference between a Byron and a Shakspeare. The former wanted that proper balance of the different elements, which gives power over mind; and his intellect, though that of a giant, was distorted and unwieldy. The latter, on the other hand, combined these, in extent and symmetry, to a degree perhaps unequalled by any other writer. Hence his works constitute a kind of universal language, for the most part as significant now as on the day they were written.

Perspicuity is of the utmost importance, but it is rather the result of a combination of elements, than itself an element.

A thorough knowledge of the subject, too, is indispensable to the author. For it matters not what a man's employment is; to be successful, he must make himself perfectly familiar with the materials he

is to use, as well as the instruments with which, and the purposes to which they are to be applied.

Method may also be regarded not only as conducive to perspicuity, but as essential to the highest degree of power. There is a mode of arrangement in nearly every subject, that will give each of its parts a peculiar force. Then, again, we are permanently influenced only by so much as we retain some impression of in the mind. But when a strict and natural order is maintained, every prominent point may be made the property of the attentive reader.

It will be seen, that of the three elements here mentioned, each appeals to one or more of the great principles of universality in man. Here is the secret of their importance. These sympathetic chords, when skillfully touched, vibrate through the whole range of human hearts, and, returning, bear back the echoes of victory achieved. Like the notes of the musical scale, the changes upon these can be endlessly varied; but nothing short of a life of the most diligent study and practice can qualify a man to combine and bring out the highest degree of harmony of which they are susceptible. Happy that Orpheus, who has so far mastered them, that not rocks and trees, but human hearts, move reverently to the music of his lyre.

THE INFLUENCE OF WAR UPON SOCIETY.

BY ANDREW FLINN DICKSON, ABBEVILLE, N. C.

It is a fact well worth observing, however trite it may seem, that the successive efforts by which the world cast off her old slough of ignorance and barbarism, and came forth in the nobler garments of light and knowledge which she now wears, were either caused or accompanied by the development of some great truth in moral or physical nature—were brought to light by the effulgence of some mighty law, hidden till then, from man's negligence, and suddenly shot out, like the star of another nativity, to mark the birth of new happiness and life to humanity. Strangers and pilgrims do they seem, at first, in this universe of error; long and valiantly do they struggle for a welcome or even a foothold here: and it is only when sore experience has fully tried their value, that they come to be recognized as guides to security and peace. Even then, their power to aid, to elevate, to bless, is but dimly and imperfectly seen; but when they open up, to the humble student of their treasures, the glory of their Heaven-sent beneficence, his eyes are dazzled by the celestial radiance—he feels like one who walks suddenly forth from a night that has built up its black front to the very vault of Heaven—before, above, around him, light, joy, and splendor—behind, deep, ominous obscurity!

And it may be added, that as we have not yet reached the acmé of human progress—as there still remain some heights of honor and

knowledge to climb, so we may expect them to be won by the same series of victorious efforts, marked out by the revelation of great practical principles. Indeed, it is to this very condition of things that the present age owes its endless discussions, its constant turmoil, its multitude of bitter contests; and though, under the guise of reformation, much that is false, and more that is vain, finds way to notoriety and temporary life, yet this very agitation shall work off the scum of imposture and mistake, and leave the truth, pure and unadulterated, to gratify the thirst of man for new and more potent blessing. What though they war with our long-cherished habits and opinions, and teach blind bigotry to close more firmly the organs she will not use, against truths she dare not see! This is but the pride of consistency in man, which drives him to hold on the way his fathers went; and, once conquered, it will operate as strongly for the right, as in previous ignorance it struggled for the wrong.

Among the great principles that the present age has developed, none deserves a more prominent place—whether we consider its extensively beneficial character, or its contrariety to all previously entertained notions—than the doctrine that wars are obstacles to the advancement of society—a doctrine that strikes at the root of all the old maxims of policy, and tends to establish, upon the calm philosophy of modern days, a new and intellectual system of diplomacy. That it is entirely opposed to the former ideas of mankind will appear at once, on recurring to the policy of ancient nations, whose very life was war, and their breath the misera of the battle-field. THEN, the principle was AVOWED, that there was no limit to the right of possession, but that which bounded the might to grasp and secure; in those days, there were no *wars of pretences*. But there succeeded a different period, in which ingenious philologists and lawyers were employed to torture treaties, alliances, pedigrees, and all the paraphernalia of national security, that from their dying agonies might be wrung some shadow of pretext, not contemplated by the originators, for acts of aggrandizement and high-handed injustice. Thus for the profit of war—as under the sway of Charles the Fifth of Spain, or for the glory of war, as in the days of Louis the Fourteenth of France, or through a boundless lust of both, as in Bonaparte—the tide of bloody contest swept round the whole earth again and again, till the cannon's roar and its echo had run its dreadful career over the vast circumference of man's territory. Nay, such was the infatuation of our race, that they obstinately closed their perception against all that warned them to “cease from strife,” and behold the dawn of a more peaceful era; and even now—so slow is man to give up this national intoxication—with many, “a man of peace” is but another name for a coward.

Let us examine for a moment, notwithstanding this unmeaning clamor of the thoughtless, the truth of a position formerly laid down; viz. that no great principle deserves greater prominence than the one under consideration, on the score of its *extensively beneficial character*. And first, let us inquire into the condition of things necessary to the progress of society.

There must be LAW in existence, and in healthy operation. Take law from civilized society, and the consequence would certainly be a retrograde movement—the weak would lose their security against strength; the strong would lose their shield against cunning; universal suspicion and distrust would ensue—and this once the case, all alliances between man and his neighbor would be completely broken up. But, instead of supposing law subverted, let us imagine it only diseased and partial in its action: who does not see that its efficiency would be instantly lost, and its great hope and aim cut off? All confidence between the people and their rulers must be at once annihilated, by a knowledge of the fact, that justice, in a legal contest, if attained at all, will be won by accident. In short, so notorious is this truth, that it has grown into a political maxim, "It is better to abolish the law than to make men suspicious of it." This subject cannot be better illustrated than by a reference to the present condition of Spain. Recent travelers, after describing the crowds of bold and hardy men, collected to enjoy the sports or exhibitions of their gala-days, almost uniformly mention the fact, that the simple appearance of an officer of justice will overawe and disperse them; nay, if the alguazils approach the door of a dwelling, the inmates, wringing their hands in perplexity and distress, secrete their valuables, lamenting meanwhile the misfortune of such a visitation: such is the natural condition of a country whose laws and whose government have not earned the confidence of its subjects.

Now that war is an enemy to law is a point that need hardly be argued in a land where martial law, as it is called, is so much dresded as in our own comparatively peaceful territory. We know—though, thank heaven, but few of us have seen—the rapidity with which the substitution of an arbitrary martial discipline, for the long-trusted bulwarks of legal enactment, wears away public confidence, even in the latter, and drives it to disease and inefficiency. But it is not enough to say that war is a foe to law; we assert it is its arch enemy—there is none greater or more fatal. It destroys the habit of obedience to reasonable restraints, by substituting at intervals a despotic power, that rules by fear; it teaches man to look at individual will, more powerful than law; it burdens a nation with vast expences, and yokes it to ruinous debt, to be removed by taxation, which taxation calls for new and more oppressive laws; it breeds, in the thousands of a nation's host, habits of immorality that plague the land through a series of generations; and now, what is there in the whole universe of ill, that could do more? Famine and pestilence may bring distress, and distress engender crime; but here is a mightier than famine, a more terrible than pestilence.

The social virtues, secondly, lie even nearer the foundations of society than law itself, which is, indeed, but the fortification man has erected for the preservation and nurture of the former. A complete respect for the moral and proprietary rights of his neighbor, a strict attention to domestic duties, and "a love for the kindnesses of life," constitute the basis on which man has erected the great fabric of civil society; this is the offspring, and they the parents, of social happiness and ease.