
REACTIONARY EFFECT OF HUMAN CONDUCT

Slowly, and at fearful cost, mankind is learning that the taking of something for nothing is suicidal, and that the commandment, "Love thy neighbor as thyself," is a law of self-preservation.

The Scriptural injunction, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," if practiced, would create a condition of existence which no man should disregard on his own account.

We will not discuss a hereafter, or future rewards or punishments. We will confine our comments to life as it is found in this world.

After all that humanity has seen and has suffered, through we know not how many centuries, man does not yet fully understand the importance of the subjective or reactionary effect of human conduct, and yet this reactionary effect destroys men, dissolves fortunes, and rots down families.

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For centuries men have read the Scriptural declaration that "God will visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, even unto the third and fourth generation," without making a personal application of it. To each reader it has seemed something far away—a warning for others to heed. But if we stop to look around us, we can see men decaying, mentally, morally, and physically. We see fortunes disappear and children going to premature graves, all because of the sins of the father reacting upon himself and his children.

Too little importance is attached to the effect of an act upon the person acting. Few people stop to consider the fact that a man cannot indulge in a mean trick, be it ever so small, without lowering his moral status.

The writer recently heard a young man laughingly tell of his outwitting a car conductor, and succeeding in riding into the city without paying the usual fare. He told the

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story in great glee, thinking it, no doubt, an evidence of his astuteness and cleverness. This seems a trivial thing, and yet that little dishonest trick may be the beginning of that young man's ruin. He is cultivating a desire to get something for nothing.

After decades of groping, man is learning to understand the laws governing the human body; and he who deliberately violates them is termed a fool. Man has learned that as a consequence of a violation of these laws a cellular change takes place in that part of the body affected, and a process of dissolution sets in, which, if not arrested, causes death.

It is not a case of applied punishment from without. An offended Deity will not at some time in the future inflict a punishment. It is the process of dissolution from within that is felt. In some cases, where proper remedies are administered, nature will renew the affected parts; others are incapable of being restored.

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The body of anyone thus afflicted is defective. It is diseased, and the disease may be transmitted to the offspring,—sometimes through several generations. When the physical organization is normal and radiant with health, there is happiness and pleasure in living; but if the laws of health have been violated, the defective and suffering organization wears away in a slow death.

Vaguely, and with imperfect vision and halting step, civilized mankind is beginning to understand that man has a moral organization, delicate and sensitive, and governed by eternal laws, just as is the case with the physical organization. If any of these laws are violated, a change takes place in the individual affected; a process of dissolution follows, and the suffering that ensues is not a punishment inflicted by a God, but the natural pain of a diseased and dying soul.

In some cases a reformation takes place; the

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diseased part of the soul is cured, and the patient recovers his normal condition. In other cases there is no cure, no re-growth, but there is permanent deformity. Continued or repeated violations in time entirely destroy the moral nature and leave the individual incapable of pure and lofty sentiment,—capable only of enjoying pleasures that appeal to a depraved mind.

When the moral organization is normal and consequently healthy, there is moral felicity, peace and joy, and every duty in life is a pleasure.

The physical and moral organizations merge into and influence each other to a greater or less extent; injury to the physical affects the moral, and *vice versa*. The secrets of the heart leave their impress upon the body, and, as a rule, crimes write their history upon the faces of the perpetrators, and the mean and cringing form too plainly pictures the craven

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soul within; while, on the other hand, the upright carriage, the frank, open countenance, and eyes that show no guile, proclaim their owner's probity.

There are exceptions to this rule, as there are to all rules; but he who can read human nature correctly will declare them few.

It is true that the evil that men think and do may mar their countenance and debase them morally; and the consequence of doing violence to the moral nature is not limited to the thinker and the doer, but puts a blight upon his progeny, so that innocent children have to pay the penalty for the evil thoughts and deeds of their parents.

There are poisons which, when they first enter the system, act as a stimulant. They make the blood circulate faster, and the eyes brighter, and give the cheeks color. This is the flush of the poison; it soon subsides, and then the process of decay, dissolution and death

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sets in, and the deadly work goes on, sometimes slowly, sometimes quickly, until the patient is destroyed.

So there are moral poisons that first give the victim the flush of prosperity; this over, the process of moral dissolution begins.