

# LECTURES

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**The Imagination;**

**ITS USE AND ITS ABUSE.**

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**A LECTURE**

**BY THE**

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## THE IMAGINATION; ITS USE AND ITS ABUSE.

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THE Imagination is a faculty which is apt to be strong in youth. I am to endeavour to show how it ought to be regulated. For like every other natural endowment, it is not to be eradicated, but to be guided and improved. I am not to enter into any profound metaphysical speculations, but it will be needful first to show what is the Nature of the Imagination; and having done so, I will then enlarge on its Use and Abuse, and on the Means of Cultivating it.

### L.—ITS NATURE.

The Imagination is one of the Reproductive Powers of the mind. In this respect it is like the Memory. It is the office of the Memory to re-produce what has been previously before the mind, in the form in which it first appeared, and with the belief that it has been before the mind in time past. The Imagination also re-produces, but it re-produces in new forms, and is not accompanied with any belief as to past experience. Both are reflective of objects which have been before the mind; but the one may be compared to the mirror which reflects what is before it in its proper form and colour; whereas the other may be likened to the kaleidoscope which reflects what is before it, in an infinite variety of new forms and dispositions. Each of these has its pecu-

liar endowments by which it is enabled to accomplish its specific purpose. The Imagination does not, like the Memory, disclose to us realities ; but on the other hand the Memory cannot enliven by the varied pictures which are presented by the sister power. Each is beautiful in its own place, provided it is kept in its own place, and the one is not put in the room of the other—as was said severely of an author that he resorted to his imagination for his facts, and his memory for his figures. The one is represented by experience, experiments, observations, records, annals ; the other by allegories, myths, statues, paintings, and poems. The one, as Bacon has remarked, is peculiarly the faculty of the historian, the other of the poet and cultivator of the fine arts.

I place the Imagination among the re-productive powers, for far-reaching as it is, it cannot produce any thing of which it has not had the elements in a previous experience. Its power is always constructive, and never creative. "This shows," says Locke, "man's power to be much the same in the material and intellectual worlds, the materials in both being such as he hath no power either to make or destroy." A man born blind cannot by any native power of his own mind, apprehend colours, nor can the man born deaf have the dimmest idea of music. But when a person has seen colours, though he should afterwards, like Homer or Milton, be smitten with blindness, he may be able by the imagination, to mingle them in unnumbered ways, all different from the manner in which they are mixed in existing objects, natural or artificial. Give to one possessed with fine musical ear a knowledge of sounds, and he may now arrange and combine them, so as to produce symphonies such as human ear never listened to before, but which, as it listens to them, makes the soul to swell or sink with its swelling or sinking notes.



In analysing the Imagination we find two powers involved in it, an Imaging and a Constructive Power.

1. *It has an Imaging Power*, and is thence called Imagination. For this same reason it was called Phantasy by the ancient Greeks, by the writers of the middle ages, and in early English, as for example in the works of Bacon. Such a case as the following may enable us to understand what is meant by this picturing power. A mother, let me suppose, looks out of the window of her dwelling to take one other look of a beloved son setting out to a distant land, that he may there earn an honourable independence. It is a fond look which she takes, for she knows that on the most favourable supposition, a long time must elapse before these eyes can again rest upon him. She continues to fix these tear-filled eyes upon him till a winding of the road takes him out of the field of view. When he has turned that corner she can no longer be said to perceive him by the senses, but the mind's eye, as Shakespeare calls it, can still contemplate him. For often, often does she image to herself that scene with all its accompaniments. Often does the memory recall that son at the particular turn of the road, on a particular day, rainy or sunshiny, in a particular dress, passing round that corner; and as she does so, the whole is as it were visible before her. In this the senses are no longer exercised but the memory; and the imagination may also begin its appropriate work. For not only will the mother recall the scene, as it occurred, there will be times when it becomes more ideal, when one part will be separated from another, and when the parts selected for more particular contemplation will be mixed with other circumstances; and in various forms it will appear in her night dreams, and reappear in her day dreams, and she will picture that son toiling and struggling in that distant land to which he has gone, rising from one step of aggrandizement to another, and



returning at last by that same road, and round that same corner, to this same home ; and she will picture herself as receiving him, not as she parted with him, with mingled fears and hopes, but with one unmingled emotion of joy, while he showers upon her a return for that affection which she so profusely lavished on him in his younger years. This is an illustration of the picturing power of the mind. In it there is involved,

2. *A Constructive Power.* For the mother not only pictured the past, she put it in new shapes and combinations. Like the prism, the imagination divides that which passes through it into rich rainbow colours.

In this Constructive Power there seems, when we analyse it, to be involved : first, a diminishing power ; having seen a human being, I can imagine a Lilliputian—children, we find, are greatly interested in the exploits of Tom Thumb. There is, secondly, an enlarging power. Having seen a man, I can picture a giant, and be entertained with a narrative of his feats. Thirdly, there is an abstracting power. Having seen a church, I can picture the steeple apart from the rest of the building. Fourthly, there is a compounding power. Having seen a bull and a bird, I can put the wings of the bird on the body of the bull, and fashion a winged bull, such as is seen on the sculptured slabs of Nineveh.

This last is the highest property of the Imagination. It is one of the characteristics of genius. It is a constituent of every kind of invention. The particular character of the invention will be determined by the native tastes and predilections, and by the acquired habits of the individual. If a person has a strong tendency to observe forms, the imagination will call up the shapes in new combinations, and if his talent is cultivated, he may become a painter. If he is disposed to admire the beauties of nature, landscapes will be apt to appear before his mind made up of new dispositions of

objects which he has witnessed in real scenes. When an individual has a mechanical turn, the imagination will ever be prompting him to devise some new instrument or engine ; or if his taste be architectural, new buildings will rise in vision before him. If he is a man of great flow of sensibility, he will ever be picturing himself or others—a mother, sister, or wife, in circumstances of joy or of sorrow ; and at times weaving an imaginary tragedy or comedy in which he and his friends are actors.

This is a gift which, like every other, can be cultivated. I know, indeed, that genius is in itself a native endowment. No teacher can communicate it in return for a fee, nor can it be acquired by industry ; but unless pains be taken, it is apt to run wild, and become useless or even injurious. It admits of direction and improvement. The painter who would rise to eminence in his art, must study the finest models, and fill his mind with scenes natural or historical, such as he would wish to represent. The poet who would awaken his genius must live, and breathe, and walk in the midst of objects and incidents such as he would embody in verse. In science discovery is commonly the reward reaped by a power of invention which has been trained and disciplined. It is seldom that discoveries are made by pure accident. It was, (according to the common story) on the occasion of Newton seeing an apple fall to the ground, that the thought flashed on him, "this apple is drawn to the earth by the same power which holds the moon in her orbit." But how many people had seen an apple fall without the law of universal gravitation being suggested to them. The thought arose in a mind long trained to accurate observation, and disciplined to the discovery of mathematical relations. It was as he gathered up the fragments of a crystal which had fallen from his hands to the ground, that the Abbé Haüy discovered the principles which regulate the crystalli-

zation of minerals ; but the idea occurred to one who was addicted to such investigations, and who was in fact studying forms at the very time. On falling in with the bleached skull of a deer in the Hartz forest, Oken exclaimed, "This is a vertebrate column," and started those investigations which have produced a revolution in anatomy ; but the view presented itself to one meditating on these very subjects, and in a sense prepared for the discovery.

Before leaving this head it is proper to state that the imagination can represent and put into new forms not only the material, but the mental and the spiritual worlds. The mother in the illustration employed, can not only picture her son in new scenes, she can picture the feelings which he may be supposed to cherish in these scenes, or the feelings with which she herself may contemplate him. Milton, culling what was fairest from the landscapes and gardens which had passed under his view, describes in his "Paradise Lost" an Eden fairer than any scene now to be found on our globe ; but as a still higher and far more successful achievement of his genius, he contrives, by combining and intensifying all the evil propensities of human nature,—pride and passion, ambition and enmity to holiness,—to set before us Satan contending with the holy angels and with God Himself.

The poet, the dramatist, the novelist, dispose the elements of human nature in all sorts of new shapes and collocations in order to please, to rouse, or instruct us. If I am not mistaken, poetry and fiction generally must be led to deal more and more in every succeeding age with the motives, the sentiments, and passions of mankind. This is a field very much overlooked by the ancients, and left over to the moderns to cultivate. If we leave out of account the Book of Job, and other portions of the Hebrew Scriptures, we shall find very little of the deeper moods and feelings of humanity in the poetry of the ancients. The poet who



would catch the spirit of modern times, must unfold the workings of the soul within, as the ancients exhibited the outward incident.

I believe that the outward and visible machinery used in times past by the poets is waxing old, and must soon vanish away. We can relish to some extent the allusion to harps and lyres, to nymphs and muses, to Minerva and Apollo, by the Greeks and Romans, for they were sincere in the use which they made of them. But it is only indicative of the barrenness of his genius to find the modern youth talking of awaking his lyre, when perhaps he never saw a lyre in his life; invoking the Muses when he believes that there are no Muses; and appealing to Apollo when he knows full well that Apollo cannot help him. Poetry, in order to be true poetry, must come up welling from a true heart. There was nothing artificial in the use of their mythology by the Greeks and Romans; but there must always be something unnatural, not to say affected, in the employment of it by the moderns. The old apparatus of the poets is now gone, and gone for ever,—and I for one do not regret it; but will the scientific character of the age, which believes in astronomy and geology, and not at all in ghosts or fairies, admit of any new machinery tangible and visible? I doubt much if it will, for there would be no sincerity in the use of such; and sincerity must be an element in all genuine poetry.

Is the modern then precluded from the exercise of the Poetic Imagination? Is the time of great poets, as some would hint, necessarily passed away? I, for one, believe no such thing. But I am convinced, at the same time, that poets who would do in these times what the older poets did in their days, must strike out a path different from that in which the ancients walked. The novelist has, it seems to me



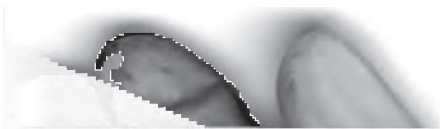
already entered on this path. He has described human nature, or at least certain features of it,—its passions, foibles, consistencies, and inconsistencies ; and so his works have had a popularity in these latter days far exceeding that of the poet. Poets are now read very much in proportion as they deal with mankind. The poetry of Shakespeare ranks higher, I suspect, in this age than that of Milton, and this mainly because the former exhibits human nature in almost every variety of attitude—always excepting the religious. Most of the greater poets of the past age delighted to daguerreotype the states of the human soul ; whether in its moods of quiet communion with nature, like Wordsworth ; or in the wider excursions of the imagination, like Coleridge and Shelley ; or in the deeper workings of passion, like Byron. Even when bringing before us the objective world, they often expose it to the view by a flash of light struck by the inward feeling awakened. Tennyson, in his "In Memoriam," gives us little else than the feeling of sorrow for the departed projecting itself on the external world, and darkening it with its shadow.

I believe that, as the world advances in education and civilization, and entertains a greater number and variety of thoughts on all subjects, and is susceptible of an ever increasing range of emotions, poetry must take up the theme, and make the workings of human nature its favourite subject. This is a mine of which the ancients gathered only the surface gold, but which is open to any one who has courage and strength to penetrate into its depths, and thence to draw exhaustless treasures. As the most inviting of all topics to the poet, I would point to the human soul, —to its convictions and its doubts, to its writhings and struggles, in boyhood and manhood, in idleness and in bustle —to its swaying motives, its desperate fights, and its crowning conquests.

## II.—ITS USE.

The imagination has a noble purpose to serve. It widens the horizon of the mental vision ; it fills the empty space which lies between the things that are seen ; and it gives a peep into the void which lies beyond the visible sphere of knowledge. It thus expands the mind by expanding the boundary of thought, and by opening an ideal, outside the real, world. It is also fitted to extend the field of enjoyment. It peoples the waste, and supplies society in solitude ; it enlarges the diminutive, and elevates the low ; it decorates the plain, and illumines the dim. The cloud in the sky is composed of floating particles of moisture, and would be felt to be dripping mist if we entered it, but how beautiful does it look when glowing with the reflected light of the setting sun ; such is the power of fancy in gilding what would otherwise be felt to be dull and disagreeable. The imagination can do more than this ; it can elevate the sentiments and the motive power of the mind by the pictures, fairer than any realities, which it presents.

This faculty has purposes to serve even in science. "The truth is," says D'Alembert, "to the geometer who invents, imagination is not less essential than to the poet who creates." To the explorer in physical science it suggests hypotheses wherewith to explain phenomena ; and which, when duly adjusted and verified by facts, may at last be recognized as the very expression of the laws of nature. There was a fine fancy in exercise, as well as a great sagacity, when the poet Goethe discovered that all the appendages of the plant, sepals, petals, stamens, and pistils, are after the leaf type, and thus laid a foundation on which scientific botany has been built. In every department of science this faculty bridges over chasms between discovered truths, and dives into



depths in search of pearls, and opens mines in which precious ores are found.

May we not go farther, and affirm that it is of service in the practical affairs of life, always when subordinated to the judgment? Not only does it supply devices to the inventive warrior, such as Napoleon Buonaparte, and suggest means of reaching unknown countries to the adventurer by sea or land, it helps the farmer to discover new modes of tilling his land, and discloses new openings in trade to the merchant.

Need I add that it is the power which constructs those scenes which are embodied in the fine building or statue; which are made visible to us on the canvas of the painter; or which the poet enshrines in verse, as we have seen shrubs and flowers imbedded in amber? Generally those writings are the most widely diffused and universally popular which address this imaging power of the mind. At the head of this pictorial school is Sir Walter Scott; and after him we have Merle D'Aubigné, Macaulay, and others in history; my friend Dr. Guthrie and many more in the writing of sermons; and in the illustrating of high moral and scientific truth, one whom I had also the honour of calling my friend, the late and most deeply lamented Hugh Miller, whose sun has gone down in so terrible a cloud, but for whom we anticipate, notwithstanding, a glorious resurrection ascension, when these noble faculties, encumbered no longer with a weight of clay, will shine as the sun, for ever and for ever. These authors do not content themselves with relating the bare incident, they set before us the actors with all their accompaniments of locality, dress, manner, and attitude. This pictorial power illuminates the book of knowledge, and fills it, as it were, with prints and figures, which allure on the reader from page to page, without his feeling his work to be a toil.

This faculty, too, has the power of awakening sentiment deep and fervent. And here it will be needful to call attention to the circumstance that the very mental picture or representation of certain objects,—say ourselves or others in circumstances of happiness or pain,—is fitted to call forth feeling. The novel reader rejoices over the success of the hero of the tale as he would over the triumphs of a living man ; and weeps over the misfortunes of the heroine as he would over a scene of actual misery. To account for this, it is alleged by some (as by D. Stewart), that there is a momentary belief in the reality of the object. I am not sure that it is necessary to resort to this supposition. It is the very mental picture or apprehension of persons exposed to happiness or suffering which calls forth the emotion, and this with or without a positive belief. No doubt if unbelief come in, it will arrest the play of fancy and feeling ; and unbelief will always interpose when the picture is unlike any reality ; and hence it is needful for the novelist, the tragedian, and the actor, to make the characters and accompaniments as natural as possible, lest the doubting judgment appear to scatter the images, and with them the emotions. But if unbelief does not lay a cold interruption on the process, it seems to me that the mental representations as they flow on will of themselves draw along the corresponding train of feelings, whether of joy or sorrow, of sympathy or indignation.

According, then, to the cherished imagination, so will be the prevailing sentiment. Low images will incite mean motives, and sooner or later land the person who indulges them in the mire. Lustful pictures will foment licentious purposes, which will hurry the individual, when occasion presents itself and permits, into the commission of the deed,—to be remembered ever after, as Adam must have looked back upon the plucking of the forbidden fruit. Vain thoughts will raise around the man who creates them, a succession of



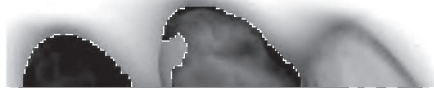
empty shows, among which he walks, as the statues of the gods are carried in the processions before pagan temples. The perpetual dwelling on our supposed merits will produce a self-righteous character, and a proud and disdainful mien and address. Gloomy thoughts will give a downward bend and look, and darken with their own hue the brightest prospects which life can disclose. Envious or malignant thoughts will sour the spirit and embitter the temper, and ever prompt to words of insinuation, inuendo, or disparagement; or to deeds of sulkiness, of malignity, or revenge.

This is the darker side. On the other side, when the fancy is devoted to its intended use, it helps to cheer, to elevate, to ennoble the soul. It is in its proper exercise when it is picturing something better than we have ever yet realized, some grand ideal of excellence, and sets us forth on the attainment of it. All excellence, whether earthly or spiritual, has been obtained by the mind keeping before it, and dwelling upon, the ideas of the great, the good, the beautiful, the grand, the perfect. The tradesman and mechanic attain to eminence by their never allowing themselves to rest till they can produce the most finished specimens of their particular work. The painter and sculptor travel to distant lands that they may see, and as it were fill their eye and mind with the sight of the most beautiful models of their arts. Poets have had their yet undiscovered genius awakened into life as they contemplated some of the grandest of nature's scenes—or as they listened to the strains of other poets, the spirit of poetry has descended upon them, as the spirit of inspiration descended upon Elisha while the minstrel played before him. The soldier's spirit has been aroused more than even by the stirring sound of the war-trumpet, by the record of the courage and heroism of other warriors. The fervour of one patriot has been created as he listened to the burning words of another patriot, and many

a martyr's zeal has been kindled at the funeral pile of other martyrs. In this way fathers have handed down their virtues to their children, and parents have left their offspring a better legacy in their example than in all their wealth, and those who could leave them nothing else, have in this example left them the very richest legacy. In this way the good men of one age have influenced the characters of the men of another, and the deeds of those who have done great achievements have lived far longer than those who performed them, and been transmitted from one generation to another.

This power gives wings to bear us aloft, above the damps and clouds of this earth, into a purer and serener atmosphere. It is an element in the communion which the Christian is permitted to hold with God ; it is necessary in order to his realizing that better world to which we are exhorted to be ever looking ; and it has a place in that exercise of the soul in which it anticipates the glory and antedates the blessedness of heaven, and which is expressively called the beatific vision.

This faculty seems to me to be strikingly illustrative both of the weakness and of the strength of the human intellect. There are very stringent limits laid on its exercises. All the images of the fancy are only reproductions of what we have experienced. In using its materials the mind can enlarge them to an indefinite extent ; but, stretch itself as it may, the image is still finite. In expanding its image in space it finds itself incapable of doing anything more than representing to itself a volume with a distinct spherical boundary. In following out its contemplation in respect of time, the image is of a line of vast length, but terminating in a point at each end. But where the mind is restrained by its weakness, *there* it exhibits its strength. It can image to itself only this bounded sphere, this line cut at both ends ; but it is led or rather impelled to believe in vastly more. At



the point where it is obliged to stop it takes a look, and that look is into infinity. Standing as it were on the shore of a vast ocean it can only see so much, but is constrained to believe that there is much more beyond this horizon of the vision. It is here that we find the origin and genesis of the idea of, or rather we should say the belief in, an INFINITE.

I feel that I am approaching a profound subject. It is not easy to sound its depths. It was long before I was able to attain to anything like clear ideas on the subject. I have pondered for long successive hours on it, only to find it shrouding itself in deeper mystery. On the one hand I found the more profound philosophers of the Continent giving this idea of the Infinite a high place—indeed, the highest place in their systems. In coming back, from flights in company with the German metaphysicians, to inquire of British philosophers what they make of this idea, I found their views meagre and unsatisfactory; for the idea of the Infinite, according to them, is a mere negation, a mere impotency. But if we can entertain no such idea, how do all men speak of it? If it be a mere impotency, how do we come to clothe the Divine Being with Infinity?

Feeling as if I needed somewhere to find it, I proceed in the truly British method to inquire, how does such an idea or belief in, the Infinite as the mind actually does entertain, rise within us, and what is its precise nature? The imagination can add and add, so far we have the immense, the indefinite. Thus, in respect of time, it can add millions of years or ages, to millions of years and ages. In respect of extension it can add millions and billions and trillions of leagues to millions and billions and trillions of leagues, and then multiply the results by each other millions of billions of trillions of times. But when it has finished this process it has not infinity, it has merely immensity. If, when we had gone thus far, time and space ceased, we should still have



the finite, a very wide finite, no doubt ; but not the infinite. But then it is a *law of the mind*, that when we have gone thus far we are necessitated to believe that existence does not stop there ; nay, to believe that, to whatever other point we might go, there must be a something beyond. Such seems to me to be the true character of the mind's conviction in regard to an Infinite. On the one hand the mind cannot image to itself the Infinite. It strives to do so ; but after all its straining, it feels as if it were ever baffled and thrown back. On the other hand, the mind is constrained in the exercise of its intelligence, to believe in the necessary existence of an Infinite and an Eternal. While the finite mind cannot embrace the infinite, it is led to believe, at the place where its efforts stop, that there is an Infinite.

Let us follow the mind in its attempt to grasp Infinity. We can easily conceive of a sphere as large as the globe of the earth ; we can thence rise to the conception of a sphere as wide as that of the earth's movement in its orbit round the sun ; and try even to conceive of that vast orbit in which it is supposed that our sun moves. Let us then stretch the imagination thus far, as far as the most distant star which Lord Rosse's telescope discloses, as far as the star which requires thousands or hundreds of thousands of years to send its rays across the immeasurable regions which intervene. Are we there at the farthest limits of existence ? Can we believe that we are ? Suppose we were carried to such a point, would we not stretch out our hand confidently believing that there is a space beyond, or that if our hand were stayed, it must be by body occupying space ? We are necessitated to believe that after we have gone thus far we are not at the outer verge of the universe of being ; nay, though we were to multiply this distance by itself, and this by itself ten thousand millions of times, till the imagination felt itself dizzy and reeling, still, after we have reached this point, we are

constrained to believe that there must be a something beyond. This seems to me to be the very law of the mind in reference to Infinity ; it not only cannot set limits to existence, it is constrained to believe that there are no limits. "If the mind," says John Foster, "were to arrive at the solemn ridge of mountains which we may fancy to bound creation, it would eagerly ask, why no farther—what is beyond?"

This seems to me to be a necessary belief ; we cannot be made to believe otherwise. Not only so, it is in a sense a universal belief. No doubt the widest image formed by many human beings, as by children and savages, must be very narrow ; but whether narrow or wide, they always believe that there must be something beyond. Pursue any line sufficiently far and we shall find it going out into infinity. So true is it, that

The feeling of the boundless bounds  
All feeling, as the welkin doth the world.

But the infinite, in which the mind is led intuitively to believe, is not an abstract infinite. It is a belief in something infinite. When the visible things of God declare that there is an intelligent Being, the author of all the order and adaptation in the universe, the mind is impelled to believe that this Being is, and must be infinite, and clothes him with Eternal Power and Godhead. The intuition is gratified to the full in the contemplation of a God Eternal, Omnipresent, Almighty and All Perfect.

### III.—ITS ABUSE.

While the imagination is fitted, when properly regulated, to widen the field of enjoyment and elevate the standard of character, there is no faculty which is more liable to run into error and excess, and in the end to land the possessor in

more helpless and hopeless misery. If I had the genius of Plato, and were able like him to clothe my thoughts in instructive myths, I would represent the God who created us, as allotting, when He distributed to the faculties their proper spheres of dominion, to the Understanding the Land, to the Passions the Sea, and to the Imagination the Air. While each has a kingdom put under it, it is all the while under a higher Sovereign to whom it must give account, and who is ready to punish, if His eternal laws are contravened. And there may be transgression, not only in erroneous judgments, not only in violent passions, but in the imagination wandering into forbidden regions. No sin brings its punishment with it more certainly in this life than a disordered imagination. This kingdom of the air has had, just as much as the land or the sea, laws impressed on it. If the land is not properly cultivated it will yield no crops ; if the sea is not skilfully navigated it will speedily dash the vessel in pieces ; but the air is, if possible, a still more perilous element to wield, than the earth or the ocean, and the penalties which it inflicts are still more fearful ; when it is offended, it raves in the storm, it mutters in the thunder, it strikes with its lightning. How melancholy have been the lives of very many of those who have possessed, in a high degree, that fearful gift, the gift of genius. One who was himself possessed of high genius was wont to thank God, because he could discover no traces of poetical talent in his son ; and when we read the lives of the poets we can well understand how Sir Walter Scott—for it is to him I refer—should have felt in this way. For in how many cases has their elevation above other men been like that of Icarus ; they have mounted into a region purer and more fervent than this cold earth, but only to find their wings melted by the heat, and their flight followed by a more melancholy fall. This is a gift which young men of noble aspirations are especially

apt to covet ; and if they possess the gift by all means let them use it ; if God has given them wings, let them soar. But let them know that if the gift is abused, in very proportion to the greatness of the endowment will be the greatness of the punishment. For in this unreal world, of their own creation, they will meet with horrid ghosts and spectres (also of their own creation, but not on that account the less dreadful), ready to inflict vengeance upon those who have made an unhallowed entrance into forbidden regions. The miseries of men of genius have been the deepest of all miseries, for the imagination has intensified all the real evils which they suffer, and added many others, giving a greater blackness to the darkness in which they are enveloped, and a keener edge to the weapons by which they are assailed.

The youthful mind, especially if of a vain, or of a pensive and indolent turn, is much tempted to exercise the imagination in "castle building." Speaking of his younger years, Sir James Mackintosh tells us : "Reading of 'Echard's Roman History' led me into a ridiculous habit from which I shall never be totally free. I used to fancy myself Emperor of Constantinople. I distributed offices and provinces among my school-fellows, I loaded my favourites with dignity and power, and I often made the objects of my dislike feel the weight of my imperial resentment. I carried on the series of political events in solitude for several hours ; I resumed them and continued them from day to day for months. Ever since I have been more prone to building castles in the air than most others. My castle-building has always been of a singular kind. It was not the anticipation of a sanguine disposition expecting extraordinary success in its pursuits. My disposition is not sanguine, and my visions have generally regarded things as much unconnected with my ordinary pursuits, and as little to be expected, as the crown of Constantinople at the school of Fortrose. These fancies, indeed,

have never amounted to conviction, or, in other words, they have never influenced my action, but I must confess they have often been as steady and of as regular recurrence as conviction itself, and that they have sometimes created a little faint expectation, or state of mind, in which my wonder that they should be realized would not be so great as it naturally ought to be." A person of very different temperament, Charlotte Elizabeth, describes herself as falling, in her younger years, into a similar habit, which, however, she speedily corrected. "I acquired that habit of dreamy excursiveness into imaginary scenes and among unreal personages which is alike inimical to rational pursuits and opposed to spiritual mindedness." I have remarked in my own experience (for I confess to have been an architect of these airy fabrics) that all such "vain thoughts," as the Scriptures characterize them, sooner or later, end in sadness;—after the height comes the hollow, deep in proportion to the previous elevation—after the flow comes the ebb, to leave us stranded on a very sandy waste. The mind when it awakes, as it must, revenges itself for the dreams by which it has been deceived. For the time, they enfeeble the will, they relax the resolution, they dissipate the energies, and they issue in chagrin, disappointment with the world, ennui, and not unfrequently bitterness of spirit. The indulgence in such weak imaginations is like the sultry heat of a summer day; it is close and disagreeable at the time, and it is ever liable to be broken in upon by thunders and lightnings. These gathering clouds, though they may seem light and floating, will sooner or later pour forth tempests. They that sow the wind shall reap the whirlwind.

If the imagination is unlawfully engaged when building palaces among the gilded clouds, it is equally misemployed when under the guidance of a melancholy spirit it is hewing

benevolence, which, like other habits, will grow and strengthen with the exercise. In going into such scenes we may not feel so keenly as we at one time did ; but if the mere sensibility of benevolence is lessened, the principle and the habit are increased. But it is different when our feelings are in the way of being roused by harrowing scenes in a romance ; here we have the feelings deadened to ordinary misery, without any habit of active benevolence being acquired. Hence it is that we so often find that the eyes which stain the novel with tears, refuse to weep over the real miseries of the poor. "From these reasonings it appears," says the philosopher last named, "that an habitual attention to exhibitions of fictitious distress is in every view calculated to check our moral improvement. It diminishes that uneasiness which we feel at the sight of distress, and which prompts us to relieve it. It strengthens that disgust which the loathsome concomitants of distress excite in the mind, and which prompts us to avoid the sight of misery ; while at the same time it has no tendency to confirm those habits of active benevolence without which the best dispositions are useless."

This is the result even on the supposition that the characters are properly drawn. Still more fatal consequences follow when the imagination is employed in such works to decorate vice or depreciate true excellence ; to picture human nature as essentially good, and the ungodly as truly happy ; to represent piety as mean—as I am sorry to say Dickens does at times by his delineations of professors and ministers of religion, or profanity as something noble ; to picture the religious as either fools or hypocrites, or daub over with paint the face of fading worldly vanity.

It would be wrong in me to close this head without referring to the excessive stimulus given to the imagination in certain forms of religious worship. The law of God permits

no images in our places of worship. The law of the land, quite as I think in the spirit of the word, permits, in the National Churches, no crosses on the altars, and extinguishes all candles—all right, as I think when we have the light of heaven, the true image (and not wax candles) of God who is light. All such corporeal representations are not only inadequate, they are of a misleading character. "To whom will he liken God, or what likeness will ye compare unto Him." The stars in their purity are not suitable emblems of His holiness; nor the moon shining in beauty of His loveliness; the sun in all his splendour has his beams paled in the dazzling splendour of His glory. The fundamental evil of images, as used in the worship of God, does not lie in their being pictures, but in their incapacity to act as pictures. There can be no corporeal image of an incorporeal God. No statuary, no painting can aid in the worship of a spiritual God. It is one grand aim of the New Testament to lead us to worship "God who is a spirit, in spirit and in truth."

I venture to go a step farther, and to maintain that there may be unlawful stimulus given to the imagination by an excess of what is lawful in itself. It is never to be forgotten that religion and religious worship do not consist in an excited imagination, and the feelings that flow from it; but in very different qualities, in faith, in adoration, in penitence, in love. All show, all music, which tend to raise up mere sensuous images, have an earthward instead of a heavenward tendency. The religion of stained glass and altar cloths, of vestments and processions, the worship of which church-architecture is the body, and music the soul, may be fitted to kindle the mind into a sort of excitement; but it is with strange fire, and not with fire from off the altar; and it vanishes in smoke and incense, and ascends not to the ear of God in heaven.



## IV.—MEANS OF CULTIVATING IT.

The Imagination may best be educated by laying up a store of noble images, ready to present themselves when occasion requires, to enliven and instruct the mind.

There are works of man fitted to furnish such lively figures. There is the statue, with the soul shining through the marble. There is the painting, setting before us historical incident and character, and rousing the soul to high sentiment, and energetic action. There is the grand cathedral, with its imposing towers, its pillar succeeding pillar, and arch upon arch, with the long perspective of the nave, and the withdrawing aisle. It is worth our pains to travel many a mile in order to furnish the mind with such memories.

But the works of God are still more replete than those of man with food for the fancy. In particular, nature presents everywhere model figures which strike the eye, which imprint themselves on the memory, and engage the musing intellect. In conjunction with a most accurate naturalist, Dr. Dickie, I have traced such typical forms through the various kingdoms of nature.\* Every planet has a regular oblate spheroid shape, and it runs in a regularly elliptic orbit. In certain circumstances most, if not all minerals, assume a crystalline form which is mathematically exact. But it is in the organic kingdoms that we discover forms playing the most important part. All plants and all animals are built up of cells which have a uniform structure. The next figure that appears in the animal as in the vegetable kingdom, is what I call the Organic Column. It is a shaft widened at the two ends. You may see it in the stalk of a leaf, in the internodes of firs and pines, and in the bole of many an old tree, wide at the base, then narrowing, and again swelling.

\* See "Typical Forms and Special Ends in Creation." By James McCosh, L.L.D., and George Dickie, M.D., 2nd Edition, 1857.



This I believe to be the model figure of all the stems of the plant. It is now acknowledged that all the parts of the flower are formed after the model of the leaf, and I have shown that there is a correspondence between branch and leaf, and that therefore there is a unity of plan running through the whole plant. If we turn to the animal, we observe the same organic column appearing in the bones; you may see it visibly in the bones of the fingers and toes, of the hand and foot, and in those of the legs of man, and of all quadrupeds. I believe (with Dr. Dickie) that it is the model to which the individual bones of the skeleton are conformed. It is now agreed that the whole skeleton of the animal is made up of a series of parts called *Vertebrae*. These are truths capable of scientific demonstration. But without scientific knowledge any one may notice that every species of plant, and every species of animal, has its type; and that there are lovely forms presenting themselves in flower and tree, and in the general frame and separate organs of animals. How beautiful an object is a tree growing with all its foliage, freely and fairly, on a sheltered lawn! How picturesque is the same tree in winter, so sharply defined by a frost-bound covering of snow! Now, the fancy is cultivated, and through it the meditative intellect, when, to use the language of Wordsworth, "Man, in his spirit, communes with the forms of nature."

No one has wandered much among the lovelier or grander of nature's landscapes without witnessing scenes which can never be effaced from the tablet of the memory, but which are photographed there as by a sunbeam process. It may be a sweet valley, separated from all the rest of the world, and protected from all the storms of life, and in which repose visibly dwells. Or it may be a wide extended plain, and fields clothed with hedge-rows and scattered trees, and dotted over with well fed kine, which need only to bend their necks



to find the herbage ready to meet them, and a river winding slowly through the midst of it, and lively villages with village churches on either bank ;—merry England discloses a hundred such scenes, to rebuke our peevishness, and subdue the soul into cheerfulness, as it beholds them and loves to recall them. All that has a sharp point, or a sharp edge ; all that has a ridge, or is rugged ; all that is steep or perpendicular, is especially fitted to leave its sharply-defined image in the mind. The very Lombardy poplar helps to relieve the tame plain. The church-tower or spire fixes the whole village in the memory. The windmill, though not the most improved piece of machinery, and though the movements of its outstretched arms, as they forever pursue without overtaking each other, are somewhat awkward, is notwithstanding, a most picturesque object, as seen between us and the sky. The ship, with its pointed masts and its white sails stretched out to the breeze, makes the bay on which it sails look more lively and interesting. More imposing, there are the bold mountains which cleave the sky, and the sea-worn rocks which have faced a thousand storms, and are as defiant as ever. How placid does the lake sleep in the midst of them, sheltered by their overhanging eminences, and guarded by their turreted towers : heaven above looks down on it with a smile, and is seen reflected from its bosom. Grandeur still, there is the ocean always old, and yet ever new in its aspects ; never changing, and yet ever changing ; and the steep cliff, with the sea-bird careering from peak to peak, and hoarsely chiding all human intruders into what it reckons as its own domains. The faculty which God has given us is best educated by the contemplation of the scenes which God has placed around us. A wander among such scenes, at least once in our lives, or better still, once a year, when our large cities yield abundance of dust but refuse to give us breath, is as exhilarating to the mind as it is to the

body, and the mental vigour resulting will continue longer than the health of body ; while the pictures thus hung round the chamber of the mind will, as it were, be looking down upon us ever and anon, to relieve the tedium of our daily solitudes.

But the mind may be stocked with still nobler images. The highest part of man's nature is not the sentient, but the moral and spiritual. Those who would give the highest training to the mind must furnish to it deeds of excellence, tales of heroism. There are characters brought under our notice in history and biography which transcend in grandeur the noblest objects in inanimate creation. The character of him who, in his infant years was exposed at the river's edge, is an object more deserving of our contemplation than the Nile, with all the antiquities on its banks. The loveliest of the mountains of Judah is not so interesting an object as the shepherd boy who there defended his flocks from the lion and the bear, and tuned his harp to the praises of God. Horeb itself, even the Mount of God, is not so sublime an object as the stern prophet who fled thither to seek communion with God. The ocean, in all its power of tempest, is not so grand an object as the Apostle Paul, so calm when the ship was driven up and down in Adria, so calm in the midst of the tumults of the people. Luther out-strips in elevation the highest of the Saxon Alps. The stern purity of John Calvin awes me more than Mont Blanc clothed in ice and snow. Cranmer towers higher than the Derby Peak. John Knox impresses me more than Ben Nevis ever did. The stalwart men of the days of the Puritans comport themselves with a loftier mien than the stateliest of our English oaks. I should like much to see the bananas, the bread-fruit trees, and tree ferns of the Islands of the Pacific, but I may get greater good by reading the life of the martyr of Erromanga. I could wish to visit those most interesting countries which



Dr. Livingstone has disclosed to the civilized world ; but when prevented from this, I may feel my soul inspirited by learning how such a man perilled his life in order to carry the Gospel to the ignorant heathen. Let the mind of youth be stored with such tales, whether taken from inspired or uninspired biographies. That nation is truly a noble one whose history presents to its youth—to inspire them with patriotism—the examples of men who endured sufferings in order to accomplish great and good ends. That Church is to be revered as truly an apostolic one, which can show martyrs who have bled in defence of the truth.

Let, then, the mind of youth be inspired by tales of heroism. But let me not be misunderstood. I do not reckon that man a hero who has slain hundreds of thousands of his fellow-creatures, and subdued vast countries and continents, but who has been all the while the slave of his own ambition. I trust that as the world grows older it will grow wiser also, and reserve its admiration for heroes of a higher stamp. By heroes, I mean persons who have risen above the meanness of the world,—above their age it may be,—above themselves; who have sacrificed their own interests for the good of others; who have aimed at nothing less than rendering their fellow men wiser and better. A heroism this, to be found as readily in the cottage as in the palace; in the most obscure alley of a great city as in the camp or the battle-field ; in the weaker woman as in the stronger man. She is a heroine in my estimation who, knowing that she risks her life, nurses night and day the brother or sister who is in raging fever, and breathing infection all around. He is the hero who, walking in the midst of temptation, and defalcation, and pollution, holds himself high above it, and refuses to be contaminated by it.

Every one may claim a noble lineage who is descended from ancestors who displayed such qualities. He is of no

mean birth who has had an honest father and a virtuous mother. A man's personal experience is valuable in proportion as it has brought him in contact with persons of high soul and noble purpose. Highly privileged is the youth who has had an exemplary father, or a mother who forgot herself in attending to him; who has an attached brother or sister, or who has acquired a steady and disinterested friend. This is a sort of education which ennobles a youth far more than any book-learning, or any training at school or college. These home-scenes are instructive beyond foreign travel of any description. The image of such a sister or of such a wife is far more pleasing and beneficial than the recollection of any painting of a Venus or Madonna. The remembrance of such a disinterested friend is more soul invigorating than that of any statue of Apollo or of Hercules. A man whose mind is stored by these memories is never alone, for he has friends to travel with him wherever he goes—to cheer him with their love, and enlighten him with their wisdom.

But God has nobler and yet more instructive types wherewith to enliven and educate the mind. In His Word as well as in His Works He hath suited the character of the instruction which He imparts to the faculties which He has given us. If these are types, that is, pattern figures, in nature, there are also types, that is, pattern figures, in Revelation; and the one series as well as the other is admirably adapted to our power of apprehension—only the types of the Bible convey the higher lessons.

The word type in Scripture means pattern or model form.\* The inspired writers adhere rightly to this meaning. Theologians have importunately given to this word a different signification, and in doing so have missed the Bible doctrine, and with it much profound instruction, and have

\* This view is developed in Book III of Typical Forms and Special Ends.



wasted their ingenuity in rearing a fabric of types, which is seen to be so fanciful, that shrewder minds have turned away with scorn from not only the doctrine of men, but (supposing it to be the same) from the doctrine of God. In the Bible types are pattern figures set before us for instruction. Man had such symbols instituted for his good, even in his primal state, as for example the tree of knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life. Another series begins to be unfolded after the Fall of Man in the cherubim, in sacrifices, and a succession of typical events, personages and ordinances appearing from the time of Adam, the first representative man, to the time of Jesus Christ, the second representative man.

Many have wondered at the circumstance that so much of the Bible is historical. It teaches us far more frequently by facts than by didactic precepts or doctrinal propositions. There is profound wisdom and admirable adaptation to human nature in this. For the more prominent historical men and occurrences are after a type or example. We are instructed by personages which are representative, such as Noah escaping from a doomed world in an ark ; by Abraham offering his son in sacrifice ; and Jonah being three days in the depths. We are taught, too, by events which are also representative, as by the deliverance of the children of Israel from the bondage of Egypt ; by their being nourished and refreshed by manna and water from the smitten rock ; and by their restoration to their own land after the captivity of Babylon. This is all true history, and yet it looks as if it were a parable written by some man of God for our instruction. These vivid incidents strike the imagination of children, and of nations as simple as children. The infant uses its earliest speech in asking its father or mother for a Bible story, and the savage gazes with expanded eyes in the face of the missionary as he details them. With the type of

fact, these parties take in the type of sound doctrine, while the images raise a retinue of corresponding sentiments.

The Bible is full, too, of typical ordinances and institutions. The sprinkling of the door-posts with blood, the sacrifices, the scape-goat, the washings and sprinklings—these instruct the young, and instruct all, in the need of a Mediator, of an atonement by blood, and of regeneration by the spirit. The law is still a schoolmaster to lead us on to the knowledge of Christ. Being introduced by these means to the sublime mysteries of our faith, the sign is ever after associated with the thing signified. The truths which we should apprehend, we as it were see with our bodily eyes, and our corruptions instead of being shadowy and ghostly, have a body as well as a spirit imparted to them.

Nor do types, in the Scripture sense of the term, cease on the coming of our Lord. The truth is, types are more frequently mentioned in the New Testament, and as being in the New Testament dispensation than in the Old Testament. The offices and the whole work of Christ are typical or representative. And here it may be remarked that the life and character of Jesus are brought before us not by general statement or pompous platitudes, but by an exhibition of His deeds, as He went about curing the sick, comforting the mourner, and instructing the ignorant. The Evangelists never interpose themselves between us and the object to which they call our attention, so as to obstruct the light which comes from Him by common-place exclamation, such as—How fine! How admirable! but standing aside, they, as it were, say—Behold Him for yourselves! By these simple narratives of Christ's deeds and sayings, they call forth deeper feelings than they could possibly do by high flown rhetoric. And as we have said, Christ's life and actions are typical or federal. He lives, He dies, He is buried, He rises again, as representative of His people, and His people

live with Him, die with Him, are buried with Him, and rise with Him to newness of life. Nor is it to be omitted, that in His discourses our Lord teaches not by nice distinctions, like the scribes, but by lively parables, in which visible objects represent invisible truths. These types become intertwined with the faith of every believer, and if you would cut them out unmercifully from the creed of the Christian, you would leave little behind in the mind of many an unlettered child of God. These figures shine and sparkle like stars in that heaven which is stretched over the head of the Christian traveller in this the night of his pilgrimage.

Eminent men too, such as Paul, and Peter, and John, were raised up to embody and represent the Christian life. These types have had additions made to them by those who have carefully unfolded the experience of the Christian, as by Augustine in his confessions, by Luther in the account of his struggles, and by Bunyan in the "Pilgrim's Progress." The pilgrim, with his burden, the slough of despond, the river of death, the calls to go over it;—such figures, not of the outward attitude, but of the inward experience, have added vastly more to our Christian imagery than all the paintings of the most skilled masters,—Raphaelite, Pre-Raphaelite, Post-Raphaelite,—and must go down, through all generations, blended with Christian experience.

But to the Christian, Jesus Himself must be the grand type or exemplar. He is the model man to whom we are to look in all circumstances. We may imitate others in some things, we should copy Christ in all. It is pleasant to observe the path in which we walk trodden by the footsteps of the flock, but we are to follow the flock only so far as they follow the shepherd. But Jesus is not only the representative man, He is to us the image of the invisible God. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son who is in His bosom, He hath revealed Him." The



human mind, feeling overwhelmed under the idea of an Infinite God, has ever been degrading God by representing Him in the likeness of man ; but here, in Him in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, we have a God incarnate without being degraded.\* He that hath seen Him hath seen the Father ; and by means of this image,—every other is idolatry,—we can rise to a somewhat clear, and to an altogether satisfactory view of God. Had God required us to love Him supremely, without furnishing any representation to fix our regards, the task would have been irksome and all but impossible. But with such a view as is presented to us, in the Word, of God in Christ, we feel that we can love Him, “whom, having not seen, we love ;” and we feel that the place in which He dwells has attractions to us,—is our very home,—and that we could spend an eternity there in great and ever increasing happiness.

\* See Book IV. of “Method of Divine Government, Physical and Moral,” by James McCosh, LL.D. Fifth edition.