

As the progress of the human race advances, the great need of mankind is a firm and proper foundation on which to build up human character. This is necessary to all who would make the most of their capabilities for usefulness and happiness. The foundation of every character is laid in the training and testing which it receives; and the nature of the resulting life will depend on the nature of the elements entering into it.

Life is largely what education makes it; but only a comparatively small portion of the education of the world is obtained from books. It is chiefly the result of associations. If early associations be in the right channel, guiding to timely habits and quick and symmetrical movements in study, work, or play, the life that grows amid such influences will develop a force capable of removing the greatest difficulties, and an energy enduring for all time. It is these early influences and associations that lay the foundation of character in opinions and convictions upon which the whole structure depends.

But the most important school for the training of character is the home. Here the mind of the child, yielding readily to home influences,



grows and develops either a strong, healthful character, or one utterly useless, according as the surroundings have been for good or for evil. The importance of home training cannot be over-estimated. The happiness of after life is almost entirely dependent upon it and moreover, from home and home influences are developed the rules and maxims which govern society and the world.

Character is formed by a steady, constant growth. It is not like a garment to be made directly and then put on and worn, but every day a little here and a little there, as opportunity and privilege offers, is woven into the shining web, until, either for good or bad, it becomes more invulnerable than the stoutest coat of mail. There are many little kindly acts of love and duty, many self-denials and self-sacrifices which, if rightly performed, have more influence on the real training and testing of character than all the vague phrases in existence. Precepts and examples are all very well so far as they go, but they are only theory. It requires the practice and discipline of real life, of temptations and even hardships, to form a character that can stand firm before



the world, bearing the wear and tear of actual existence, being anything and doing everything to brighten and widen the sphere of human existence.

Each person is responsible, largely, for the character he possesses: he may train himself very much in the same manner that he would train another. By exercising and educating the better and higher parts of one's nature, the meaner tendencies, being deprived of the needed vitality, will wither and decay, leaving only pure and noble motives as the instruments with which to labor and win success. But it is not always an easy matter to repress the evil and cultivate the good by mere determination of will. There must be such surroundings as will aid in the growth and make right living possible.

To accomplish this purpose what could be more effective than a broad intellectual training acquired by liberal education? Combine with this a sound moral training, a thorough cultivation of both head and heart, and you cannot fail to form a character strong and reliable for all the duties of life.

But there is another important element in the training of character well worthy of



mention, and that is the influence of labor. Application to work, though it does not necessarily make refined men and women, does have a strengthening and invigorating effect very important in the discipline of character. Labor allows contact with the world and a taking part in its affairs which is of more practical benefit than years of secluded study. Through labor, too, the advantages of healthful competition may be enjoyed. Every person who would accomplish anything in the world must necessarily meet with actions and opinions which do not agree with his own. To rise above that which he believes to be injurious and to help forward that which is deserving of aid involves such collisions and oppositions as, if borne out, will rouse the energies into such activity as to make a character eager and watchful for all the issues of life.

The test of character is found in all our works and actions, in the ability to resist temptation, in honesty and uprightness of purpose, in scorning to do a mean or unkind act. Whatever the work, the character of the workman must shine through



his productions, be they art or poetry, picture or sculpture, sermon or song. It has been said that it is in vain to talk about equalling "The Old Masters" in art, until we can equal the old masters in character. It is as true of other labor. To accomplish a noble work there must be behind and upholding it a strong, noble character and then the measure of success will be the test of the character employed.

A man's real character is better tested in his every day home life than in any other way. His self-control, his consideration for others, the books he reads, the company he keeps, the casual words he utters, all are atoms in themselves, perhaps, but taken together they not only individualize the whole character, but have a marked effect on the lives of others.

Temptations, trials, and sufferings try the the character in every conceivable manner; but he who has the persistency to work his way through all difficulties will secure to himself the respect and admiration of friends and associates, and what is more important, the self-



respect resulting from a clean conscience.

Indeed, every step in the progress of life must bring some test of character. We rise higher and higher, overcoming all difficulties until, at the summit of success, our resting place is as firm and solid as it is high, and the deeds performed in reaching it are as constant fires, lighting up for the world the paths to new and nobler lives. Look at the lives of such men as Luther, Cromwell, Pitt, our own Washington. Are they not noble results of character tried and tested? Their memories will ever be held in the greatest esteem and reverence by mankind, extending their elevating influences through all the ages to come.

Success may not always crown your efforts in life, indeed, discouragement may meet you on every hand, but the ability to press on through all difficulties, to try again and again, will cause a growth and development not to be obtained in any other manner. The words of Bishop Potter impress us with this fact when he says, "To be beaten but not broken; to be victorious but not vain glorious; to strive and



contend for the prize and to win it honestly or lose it cheerfully; to use every power in the race and yet never to wrest an undue advantage or win an unlawful mastery; verily in all this there is training and testing of character which reaches to the very roots; and this is a result which is worth all that it costs us.

With the possession of such a character as I have endeavored to describe, there are infinite possibilities to life. The full manifestation of ourselves and others is in the noble character we possess, and by its aid will it be possible for every true man and woman to win "triumphs on the fields of time, that shall be rewarded with crowns and chaplets and garlands on the shores of eternity."

Amy Myrtle Harrington.