

THOUGHT—ITS REFLEX INFLUENCE.

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Laying aside the consideration of the hereafter, man is distinguished from the lower animals by his power of reasoning: perceiving causes, he proceeds to probable effects; from given premises he arrives at conclusions. An animal follows its instinct, or propensions, and there the matter ends; the results are neither elevating nor degrading: not so with man; his mind performing its functions, sensation and consciousness alike make their impressions, impressions which ennoble or belittle according as the thoughts excited are pure, grand, beautiful, or vile, low, unseemly.

Impressions frequently re-produced from habits, habits permanently fixed in the mind, mould and make character. If, then, the mind is assimilated to its own reflections, every man becomes the arbiter of his own intellectual and moral status, so that each may determine for himself how radiant he will shine as a *man*, or how low he will grovel as a *brute*.

"To the pure all things are pure." To the man of noble thought even the crudities of earth are so many stepping-stones to a higher sphere. The monarch-poet of Israel writes, as a man "thinketh in his heart, so is he."

Not only does thought act directly on mind, the immaterial, but also indirectly on the body, the material. Thought chisels the countenance, stamping its image and superscription on every lineament of the face. That mind moulds matter, is no more a subject for debate than that matter, through the senses, acts upon mind; nor is it any more incomprehensible. Let a man, naturally morose, cultivate a gentleness of spirit and a sweet urbanity of manners, it will not be long till his face, melting into kindly smiles, will lose its misanthropic frown and wear habitually the expressive look of quiet benevolence, which disarms malice and conciliates affection. On the other hand, a man by nature