

will impair the functions of the brain ; so that we infer a mutual dependence ; while at the same time we assign the highest place, and by far the most commanding influence, to the brain.

In like manner, in the social system, no observing and reasonable man will hesitate to place religion at the head of all those influences by which the public good is promoted, the national character formed, and its destinies shaped. Moral obligation is the only power that can give genuine life and regulated action to a nation's energies ; and if that do not send its galvanic shocks into the whole system, not only will education and freedom fail of vitalization, but paralysis will seize upon the whole body politic ; — except that occasionally a convulsive agony, the symptom of approaching dissolution, may rack its frame and distort its features. Highest and foremost, therefore, we place religion among the influences that determine a nation's character ; although an important reflex influence upon religion, from education and freedom, must be admitted.

It may be desirable to state another preliminary explanation. In maintaining the mutual dependence of these three great institutions of the social economy, so that when one fails or is crippled, the others suffer the same fate, it should be remembered that we speak of the community as a whole, and not of individual exceptions. For such exceptions may exist, of a striking character. The prevalent system of religion may be very corrupt, and yet there may be found bright and beautiful examples of individual piety. So there may exist many splendid examples of scholarship, where the masses are profoundly ignorant. And even under the gloomy sway of despotism, individuals may be found enjoying a high degree of personal independence. But single exceptions of