

The Power of Habit

It is through the power of habit that every act we do affects our character. This is why habit is called second nature; habit adds new tendencies, which become an important part in the sum total of one's character.

The tendency to repeat the action that we have been in the habit of doing is seen in our most trivial concerns, as well as in more important matters, as well as in more important matters.

People get into the habit of sitting, standing and lying in certain postures, which are then said to be characteristics.

Knowledge of the power of habit is the chief means by which animals are trained to be useful to man. It is by habit that the Gypsy horse is trained wild to keep his place in the same way as his horse, to give rapid obedience to the word of command.

The importance of habit is just as great in forming moral character as in the training of soldiers and horses to automatic obedience to the word of command. All moralists recognize the fact that it is possible for men to become better or worse by the cultivation of good or bad habits, in fact, that it is just this which makes moral progress and deterioration possible. A man who yields to temptation may at first do so with reluctance, but after yielding once or twice, resistance becomes more difficult until at last by continued submission he is completely enslaved that has no control over his evil passions. On the contrary, if he had conquered the first temptation, his will would have thereby become stronger, and after frequent victories, he would have been so habituated to self-control that the temptation, which had first tried him, would have lost then its attractive power and then he might have led his moral will, strengthened by the habit of victory, to still greater moral efforts.