

reverence for Him who is the Father of us all—a feeling which, though it may not have taken the form of any profession, is yet at the bottom of their hearts, and keeps them from many a wrong and wayward step. A young man, who is thus “guarded and defended” as by unseen angels, some evening when he feels very lonely is invited to “go and hear Ingersoll,” and for a couple of hours listens to your caricatures of religion, with descriptions of the prayers and the psalm singing, illustrated by devout grimaces and nasal tones, which set the house in roars of laughter, and are received with tumultuous applause. When it is all over, and the young man finds himself again under the flaring lamps of the city streets, he is conscious of a change; the faith of his childhood has been rudely torn from him, and with it “a glory has passed away from the earth;” the Bible which his mother gave him the morning that he came away, is “a mass of fables;” the sentence which she wished him to hang on the wall, “Thou, God, seest me,” has lost its power, for there is no God that sees him, no moral government, no law and no retribution. So he reasons as he walks slowly homeward, meeting the temptations which haunt these streets at night—temptations from which he has hitherto turned with a shudder, but which he now meets with a diminished power of resistance. Have you done that young man any good in taking from him what he held sacred before? Have you not left him morally weakened? From sneering at religion, it is but a step to sneering at morality, and then but one step more to a vicious and profligate career. How are you going to stop this downward tendency? When you have stripped him of former restraints, do you leave him anything in their stead, except indeed a sense of honor, self-respect, and self-interest?—worthy motives, no doubt, but all too feeble to withstand the fearful temptations that assail him. Is the chance of his resistance as good as it was before? Watch him as he goes along that street at midnight! He passes by the places of evil resort, of drinking and gambling—those open mouths of hell; he hears the sound of music and dancing, and for the first time pauses to listen. How long will it be before he will venture in?

With such dangers in his path, it is a grave responsibility to loosen the restraints which hold such a young man to

virtue. These gibes and sneers which you utter so lightly, may have a sad echo in a lost character and a wretched life. Many a young man has been thus taunted until he has pushed off from the shore, under the idea of gaining his “liberty,” and ventured into the rapids, only to be carried down the stream, and left a wreck in the whirlpool below!

THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL DANGERS OF INFIDELITY.

If such be the danger from unbelief to individuals, still greater is it to society at large. Those who hold that human nature is a sweet and guileless thing, of course infer that it only needs to be left to itself to unfold into shapes as varied and beautiful as clustering vines or blossoming flowers. Socialist philosophers, carrying out this principle, hold that society, left to itself, will crystalize into forms of beauty and grace. A favorite maxim with them is, “The best government is that which governs least,” which they might carry a little further and say, “The best government is no government at all!” But have we come to that—that human society can be preserved without law by the magic of a few fine phrases about universal harmony? I observe in your reply to Judge Black in the North American Review, (November, 1831), that you wind up with a defence of the French Revolution, on which you pronounce this eulogy: “In spite of all the blood and crime, the People placed upon a Nation’s brow these stars: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity—grander words than ever issued from Jehovah’s lips.”

Noble words indeed! What a pity that they were nothing but words! Brave words may cover foul deeds. When Madam Roland was led to the scaffold, she exclaimed “Oh Liberty, what crimes are committed in thy name!” A few weeks since I stood in the cell in which Marie Antoinette was confined before her royal neck was placed under the knife of the guillotine; but I saw no “fraternity” there, nor even common humanity. There was no pity in those cold walls; nor in the chapel in which the Girondists passed their last night on earth—a night

“On which such awful morn could rise.”

No human sacrifice ever offered by cannibals was more horrible than when France, like an insane mother, sacrificed the best and bravest of her children.