

chaplain might be present to open their sessions with prayer, that their minds might be calmed to prepare them for the exercise of the solemn trust, on which the life of the nation hung.

DESTROYING THE BEAUTY OF DOMESTIC LIFE.

But it is not because it takes the charm from such historical legends that I dread the incoming of this cold skepticism, so much as for the evil which it will do in the present. When it has completed its work, it will leave us nothing to believe and little to love—nothing worth dying for, and not very much worth living for. All our ideals are destroyed. Even our home life is not sacred from the cold sneer—half pity and half scorn—at “family prayers”—the one hour when the windows are open towards heaven, and the atmosphere of love and peace comes floating in. This it is which gives our home-life its sweetest flavor, its most delicate aroma. “The Cotter’s Saturday Night” would not retain half its beauty without this transcendent scene:

“Then kneeling down to Heaven’s Eternal King,
The saint, the father, and the husband prays.”

Take such scenes from our American firesides, and you have taken from them their most sacred hours and their tenderest memories.

The same destructive spirit which intrudes into domestic as well as religious life, would take away the beauty of our villages as well as the sweetness of our homes. In the weary round of a week of toil, there comes an interval of rest; the laborer lays down his burden, and for a few hours breathes a serener air. The Sabbath morning has come:

“Sweet day! so cool, so calm, so bright,
The bridal of the earth and sky.”

At the appointed hour the bell rings across the valley and sends its echoes among the hills; and from all the roads the people come trooping to the village church. Here they gather, old and young, rich and poor; and, as they join in the same act of worship, feel that God is the maker of them all. Is there in our national life any influence more elevating than this—one which tends more to bring a community together; to promote neighborly feeling; to refine the manners of the people; to

breed true courtesy, and all that makes a Christian village different from a cluster of Indian wigwags—a civilized community different from a tribe of savages?

All this you would destroy; you would abolish the Sabbath, or have it turned into a holiday; you would tear down the old church, so full of tender associations of the living and the dead, or at least have it “razeed,” cutting off the tall spire that points upward to heaven; and the interior you would turn into an assembly room—a place of entertainment, where the young people could have their merry-makings, except perchance in the warm Summer-time, when they could dance on the village green! So far you would have gained your object. But would that be a more orderly community, more refined or more truly happy?

LOOSENING THE RESTRAINTS OF VIRTUE.

You may think this a mere sentiment—that we care more for the picturesque than for the true. But there is one result which is fearfully real: the destructive creed, or no creed, which dispoils our churches and our homes, attacks society in its first principles by taking away the support of morality. I do not believe that general morality can be upheld without the sanctions of religion. There may be individuals of great natural force of character, who can stand alone—men of superior intellect and strong will. But in general human nature is weak, and virtue is not the spontaneous growth of childish innocence. Men do not become pure and good by natural instinct. Character, like mind, has to be developed by education; and it needs all the elements of strength which can be given it, from without as well as from within, from the government of man and the government of God. To let go of these restraints is a peril to public morality.

You feel strong in the strength of a robust manhood, well poised in body and mind, and in the centre of a happy home, where loving hearts cling to you like vines round the oak. But many to whom you speak are quite otherwise. You address thousands of young men who have come out of country homes, where they have been brought up in the fear of God, and have heard the morning and evening prayer. They come into a city full of temptations, but are restrained from evil by the thought of father and mother, and