

favourable to humility—to piety—to yearnings towards Heaven!

The spread of education is indeed unfavourable to superstition—to the distinctions of form, to systems which under religious pretences build up an Order and a Church, who grasp at an undue return of wealth and power, but it must ultimately advance the revival and cherish and propagate the virtuous and charitable tendencies of that Religion, whose whole essence is love and charity. Between the beginning and the end—the school and the College—the primer and the philosophy of the system of general education, there may be sects who doubt and avow their disbelief; but the desert will be passed and the promised land reached at last. The restless uneasiness of doubt leads to speculation and inquiry. Inquiry conducts to truth. The French Revolution has advanced beyond all calculation the science of general politics. In its efforts upon Religion the hand of Providence is perhaps no less visible. England has been saved from the same race of butchery and crime. Philosophy has awoken from her temporary dream of atheism. The effect of education—of institutes—and of popular publications have reformed but not destroyed—the change in some of its workings has been abrupt and inconsistent, but Cobbett and Thistlewood, and Owen, have found no mass who could be incited to the work of destruction. The same causes are at work in the Church. Her altars may be robbed of their splendour—her Clergy hunted in their means—but though individuals may suffer for a time, and the sympathies of society through them be wounded—the divine spirit of Religion will shine forth, we trust, thrice purified from the ordeal, society be knit together by stronger bands, and government rest upon more enduring pillars.

Whatever may be our political sympathies, it is in vain to oppose the march of mind. It sweeps on direct, certain, irresistible! Like the waves of the sea, it will beat upon the shore, and drown in its surge the impotent and royal behest of Canute. Opposition is foolishness—but it is wise to control and direct—to meet its earlier manifestations—to yield to its demands, ere these become clamorous and extravagant. To educate is thus to christianize, and to propagate Christianity is to offer the noblest services which man can render to his Maker.

But let me ask what are the true—the legitimate objects of existence—the honourable labours of life, leading to an honourable end. Is it to be content with a faith which our reason cannot comprehend—to be bound up within that circle of duties, which the single profession or pursuit we are compelled to select as the source of a livelihood create, prescribed to live as if each day and year were the first and the last?

No, we are taught there are an immortality and old age—that there is a coming season for rest—reflection—preparation for the tomb.—Why not extend to learning and education the same maxims of worldly wisdom which we apply to the acquisition of fortune. It is necessary, say the sages of the world, in the morning, in the strength and energy of life, to husband our means—to economise—to lay up a competence for sickness—adversity—for old age.—‘Approaching age itself,’ says Bulwer in one of his essays in the Student, ‘we ought to have less need of Economy. Nature recoils from the Miser, cloaking mammon with one hand, while death plucks him by the other. We should provide for our age, in order that our age may have no urgent wants of the world to absorb it from the meditations of the next. It is awful to see the lean hands of dotage making a coffer of the grave.’ Why not apply, I ask, the same reasoning to the acquisition of learning—to the fortune of new ideas, the solacing reminiscences—the glorious conceptions which it garners up.

There is a period in every man’s life, when the active duties of the world—its pomp and busy bustle become distasteful to him. No one is exempt from sickness and physical debility. What resources has he then—what availeth even the gifts of fortune—if he cannot derive pleasure from books, and that cheering and enlightened companionship they afford. With these he can then summon to the couch, the Poets, the Philosophers, the Historians of all past time, and although fixed to one narrow and darkened chamber, lying perhaps incapable of motion, may revel in all the treasures of the mind—whether gathered up in the stately and solemn temples of philosophy, or spread abroad in the walks of the Muses. If happiness be in the mind and not in circumstance, how far superior is such a power to the mere possession—the brief and passing consequence of wealth—the ‘dignity of dollars,’ as tauntingly stigmatized by Canning. How often have all of us seen the gloom of the sick bed brightened by those rays of cheerfulness, which are imparted by religious devotion,—but even its pleasures are rendered purer, and the ardour it inspires more fervid, if philosophy and learning can be brought to its aid.

Sickness is accidental—but old age we cannot avoid. Without learning and without books it is a prison-house, created and darkened by imbecility. Less potent in the world, we become less necessary and less courted. The more dependent we become upon the pleasures of society and conversation, we find, alas, we are the more avoided and shunned. How searing to a generous heart is the impassive coldness—the icy selfishness of the world! The affections of children may then draw them around us—but these predilections do not ex-