

ble revolutions. Fearful is the load of responsibility that rests on the shoulders of such writers as Madame Dudevant, de Kock, and Eugene Sue! And this tide of continental impurity is ever rolling in on us. Even the better class of our modern novel writers either ignore Evangelical religion altogether, or refer to it from the "scorner's chair" to point a joke and to excite "the noisy laughter of the fool." In many, religion is dropt out altogether and the natural virtues are so decked out as to convey the impression that nothing more is needed. As regards the purity of the tone of her writings I suppose the amiable and accomplished Maria Edgeworth would bear favorable comparison with the best of her compeers, and yet so broad and liberal and generous a critic as that greatest of England's preachers, Robert Hall, thus describes the effect of her writings upon his own mind: "She is (says Mr. Hall) the most irreligious writer I ever read; not so much from any attacks she makes on religion as from an universal and studied omission of the subject. In her writings you meet a high strain of morality. She delineates the most virtuous characters and represents them in the most affecting circumstances in life—in distress, in sickness, and even in the immediate prospect of eternity, and finally sends them off the stage with their virtue unimpaired—and all this without the remotest allusion to religion. She does not decidedly oppose religion, but makes it appear unnecessary by exhibiting a perfect virtue without it. No works ever produced so bad an effect on my own mind." Very much of this sort of literature is abroad amongst us. Light literature, out of which the religious element has been eliminated. Literature too, antagonistic to religion though the antagonism be not very marked—wearing a veiled dress, a sugared coating—and literature decidedly infidel and immoral—this also, with its lighter and darker shades. The paths of literature are now, like the "enchanted ground" in the Pilgrim's Progress, leading on to Giant Despair's Castle, and then like the "road between Jerusalem and Jericho,"—in which the luckless traveller falls among thieves. Imminent is the risk—to such as prefer to the guide boards of Heaven and the star of Bethlehem—the sparks of their own kindling, and those false lights the great enemy has hung out which "shine to bewilder and dazzle, to blind." How true, and terrible as well, Elizabeth Barrett Browning's picture in "Aurora Leigh:"

"Sublimest dangers over which none weeps,
When any young wayfaring soul goes forth
Alone, unconscious of the perilous road,—
The day sun dazzling in his limpid eyes,
To thrust his own way, he an alien through
The world of books. Ah! you; you think it fine,
You clap hands! A fair day! You cheer him on
As if the worst could happen, were to rest
Too long beside a fountain. Yet behold!
Behold! the world of books, is still the world;
And worldlings in it are less merciful

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