

fections—unless we wish to look on maternal love and all the train of blessed consequences following after it, as moral evils—we must reject this definition of virtue, and along with it the moral system of which it forms a part.

The domestic and private affections are the very channels through which the God of nature ordained man's benevolence first to flow. His happiness and social dignity are wound up in them; and deprived of them he becomes at once devoid of moral strength. To reject them, is to mutilate and not to elevate his moral nature; and is not a jot more wise than it would be for a philosopher to pluck out his eyes in the hopes of speculating with the greater clearness on the general properties of light. The general good of man is incontestably a noble object; but it can be promoted by those means only which God has given us. And those men have ever been found to follow this noble object most steadily and wisely, who have obeyed the laws of their moral nature, and fortified themselves by the practice of the humbler virtues first placed within their reach.

The author to whom I have just alluded, saw not the obvious effects of his own principles. But bold and irreligious men were glad to follow them out, and to abide by their basest consequences. In their scheme all virtue merged into universal philanthropy—the private affections were but drains, carrying the waters of life away from their proper channel—marriage was a monopoly—patriotism a prejudice—and the common bonds of social life but the fetters of ignorance and intolerance.

This is a most remarkable instance of the mischief of general definitions and deductive reasoning in moral questions. It was suggested by some