

the modern political history of England, he reminds us how at the close of this nineteenth century of the Christian era, a man holding the confidential position of Prime Minister of a colony, and being at the same time a Privy Councillor of the Queen, could engage in a conspiracy for the overthrow of a neighboring and friendly state; and, moreover, how to carry out this design, he deceived the High Commissioner, whose Prime Minister he was, and his colleagues in the ministry; how he collected for the conspiracy an armed force under false pretences, and took part in smuggling arms to be used for purposes of rebellion, made use of newspapers under his influence or control, and spent large sums of money in fomenting rebellion, and finally was implicated in the concoction of a letter pretending to be an appeal on behalf of women and children whose lives were in danger, a letter to be dated and issued at the right moment.

Here we see a course of conduct which in private life would have been honestly and sincerely reprobated by the very man who did all these things, as by the general sense of the community; but inasmuch as it belongs to the field of politics, what happens?

The verdict of fashionable society condones it, and a great part of the nation follows suit, and even a leading minister of the Crown is found to declare in the House of Commons, apparently with the assent of his colleagues, and in all sincerity, that in all these transactions, although the man had made a gigantic mistake, he had done nothing affecting his personal honor.

In the face of such phenomena one is tempted to ask whether men's conceptions of personal honor are not in some danger of deteriorating, and whether, after all, we had not better hold on to Shakespeare as a safer guide and interpreter when he writes:

Where great additions swell, and virtue none,
It is a dropied honor.

Let us glance at the other illustration furnished by Mr. Lecky. Very few massacres in history, he says, have been more gigantic or more clearly traced to the action of a government than those perpetrated by Turkish soldiers in our generation; and few signs of the low level of public feeling in Christendom are more impressive than the general indifference with which these massacres were contemplated in most countries, or the spectacle of the sovereign of one of the greatest and most civilized Christian nations hastening to Constantinople, so soon after those savage Armenian atrocities, to clasp the hand which was thus deeply imbrued with Christian blood, and then proceeding to the Mount of Olives, where, amid scenes consecrated by the most sacred of all memories, he proclaimed himself the champion and the patron of the Christian faith.

Illustrations like these are surely a sufficient proof, if proof were needed, to show how slow men are to give an undivided allegiance to moral principles in all departments of life, and, moreover, how readily the conscience becomes a conventional and purblind conscience, domesticated and living at ease amid the most glaring inconsistencies.

How, then, it is natural to ask, are we to account for the fact that the standard of individual ethics are thus applied so slowly, so fitfully, so partially and so inconsistently, in the field of political or public life?

And the question is one to which it is not altogether easy to give a simple categorical answer, because the dislocation between private and public, or individual and corporate standards of judgment and conduct is felt to be the resultant of various causes.

In the first place it is relevant to