

MORALS AND POLITICS.



It is, indeed, singularly deplorable, especially in our advanced age of civilization, to hear men decry the influence exerted by morals upon political science. We may, I think, in some way account for this by the consideration that in our present age, when all philosophical avenues and by-ways have been zealously and studiously roamed, there are some venturesome, and, in fact, utterly reckless minds who, in their desire to bring about a change in the existing order of things, have most offensively asserted, and most diligently endeavored to inculcate the doctrine that political interests should not be subservient to, nor in any way connected with the higher principles of morality.

To show the error of this preaching is, I think, a matter of serious import to us; for, when the relations between Church and State have been fully and satisfactorily established, then we may expect to see the golden era of the world's history; the earth flowing with milk and honey; the arts and sciences properly cultivated; religion respected; and all the virtues assiduously practiced.

Should we reflect upon the results of this political atheism, what would be our conclusions? We should be obliged to say that it can benefit neither the unfortunate whom it deprives of hope, nor the prosperous whose pleasures it renders insipid, nor the subjects who find their greatest consolation in the practice of virtue, nor the rulers who feel and know that in religion alone can be found the basis of society, the bond of unity among men. Could we but properly reflect upon what would be the condition of society without religion, we might, perhaps, more fully appreciate the blessings we owe to it. Let us turn our gaze, for a moment, to pagan Rome and we may be able to judge of the extravagances into which society would plunge, were it not for the restraining influences exerted by Christian morality. Rome, in the supreme splendor of her political life; Rome the queen of nations and mistress of the world, fell a prey to the depravity and moral rottenness of her inhabitants. Augustus waded

through the blood of his subjects to ascend the imperial throne, and having conquered every obstruction, saw himself firmly established in the royal mastership. He gave a long repose to his subjects, with the result that men gave themselves up to pleasures and to the satisfaction of their passionate desires, and the prevailing calm was dignified by the name of prosperity. There was no morality, consequently no restraint. Under Augustus it was, when this so-called prosperity prevailed, that were sown the seeds which, in aftertime, precipitated the dissolution of Roman greatness and power. When we see this people bow down in reverence before a Nero, a Claudius, a Tiberius or a Caligula; when we see one Brutus slaying his son, and another assassinating his father; when we see a Catiline plotting the annihilation of the senate, we must conclude that these acts could not have been brought about without some natural perverseness, and some innate baseness of heart. To the low state of morals was this condition attributable. Were they but brought under the benign influence of Christianity, and taught to recognize that moral and political sciences go hand in hand, we might, to day, see them commanding the respectful fear of the civilized nations of our day; but, owing to the absence of religion, we have seen how they became an easy prey to the ravages of uncultured barbarians.

The same effects, somewhat less disastrous, may be traced in the history of succeeding nations. We are thoroughly aware of the evils that followed in the wake of the Reformation; and we know that in that great religious revolution, men saw that the doctrines being promulgated were such as would prove a less binding check upon their purely human desires, than those taught by the old and ever pure and unchangeable Catholic worship. Such was the case with Henry the Eighth in England. He saw in the morality inducted by the Catholic Church, a serious impediment in the way of his giving full sway to the baser instincts of his nature, and, under the plea of offended dignity, he saw fit to secede from the Church of Rome with the result that a persecution, most baneful in its consequ-