

OUR TABLE.

THE Science of Government is one which has occupied the attention of the best and greatest, from the earliest time at which the world was sufficiently peopled to render settled rules necessary for the guidance of mankind. Forms of government have been more varied than the nations which gave them birth, and these again have been improved and modified, as time and their practical working showed a superabundance of, or paucity in, any of their component parts; nevertheless, the experience of fifty centuries has been insufficient, as fifty centuries more will doubtless be, to render any scheme perfect, or to produce one which can give satisfaction to the whole people subject to its rule.

It is not improbable that this continent may at no very distant day, be the theatre of a struggle between the systems which now stand most prominently before the world—monarchy and democracy—indeed the strife has, though in a trifling and irregular manner, already commenced. It may not, therefore be deemed out of place, to offer a few—a very few—remarks, upon the leading points, as well as the practicability of each; although we do not assume to ourselves the power of being able to throw much new light upon a subject which has been already so industriously and ably handled.

The true end of all Government is or ought to be the welfare of the governed, and the chief magistrate, by whatever name he may be designated, can only be properly such by a total forgetfulness of self, wherever it can by possibility interfere with the weal of the state. He should be ready to execute the law, whoever the culprits standing arraigned before it, like that heathen law-giver, who, having issued a decree, that no armed man should enter the council room and live, was himself the first to cross its threshold with his armour on; when some one present calling out that he had transgressed his own edict, he drew his sword from its scabbard, and plunged it into his heart, with his last breath telling the people to hold the laws sacred which he thus sealed with his blood.

Republics, or as they are now termed, "Governments of and for the people," may, perhaps, in theory, be the best fitted for the happiness of the mass, (if the mass be limited and defined;) but these theories are so much based upon an ideal perfection to which mankind cannot possibly attain, that they are found altogether unmanageable in practice. As a matter of course, laws formed wholly by the popular voice, in which no other influence has a part, consult too much the extravagant ideas of freedom which the untutored mind is apt to form, when it has been taught to consider this liberty as the chief good of life. We are far, very far, from wishing to depreciate the value of the freedom, which from youth up has been our proudest

boast, but we consider that liberty is only such, when it is limited in its power to do evil—unlimited only when it would truly benefit humanity.

Were mankind perfect, they would require no government, for each would then follow the golden rule, and where there were no transgressors, there would require no restraining power, but as this cannot, without madness, be predicated of human nature, precautions must be taken against the evil ingredients of which mankind are composed; and when men are left unfettered to legislate for themselves, without one even to offer a suggestion, who is not of, or dependent upon the crowd, it is certainly sufficiently singular if means are taken for the suppression of all the immorality of which humanity is susceptible.

It is, however, still more difficult to find men, so utterly the slaves of popular favour, virtuously to execute such laws as are made, than to form statutes, which, if duly obeyed, would well answer all the ends of human government, and did the public choice fall upon a few, endowed with a moiety of the stern though wild virtue of the island-king whose case we have above cited, the danger of degeneracy would materially decrease.

The neighbouring States will in future be a standing commentary upon the inefficiency of good laws, when circumstances render them adverse to the prejudices, or fancied interests of those who made them. They present a sad example of the extreme difficulty of finding those who are sufficiently heroic in the execution of public duty, when even only a portion of the people offer opposition to their own behests, although national and individual honour alike cry aloud for the vindication of the sovereignty of the laws. It would seem as if, like the Indians, who preceded them in the vast region they inhabit, the people of these states deemed that liberty consisted in a total absence of control. It is mournful to look upon such a picture, but it is too evident, that anarchy has usurped the place of government, that the bench of judgment has itself been desecrated and despised, and each, looking upon himself as the redresser of his own wrongs, scruples not to meet his neighbour in deadly strife, until at last Justice has yielded up her sword to hatred and revenge.

Thus it has been, and, is to be feared, it will long be, unless some startling incident arouse the *soul* of the commonwealth to its danger, and the *true people* shaking off their inane lethargy, shall, by a gigantic though bloodless struggle, more regenerating in its effects than that which called their Republic into being, save their country for a few generations from its gathering doom.

Let it not be supposed that we can exult in such pictures as present themselves to our mind's eye, when we write thus. Very different indeed are the feelings with which we contemplate the eventual and signal failure of a scheme of government founded