

ed by Dugald Stewart, as an evidence of the liberality and far-sightedness of Calvin, that he was among the first to break loose from erroneous notions on this subject, which had prevailed from the time of Aristotle. In Lower Canada, and other places, it is still thought wrong to allow interest beyond a certain figure, though the public conscience seems to oscillate as to the precise point where innocence ends and sin begins. From this and innumerable other examples, it is evident that there is a culture of the conscience on a large scale, and that the successive generations of men are fortunately not constrained merely to inherit and transmit the same moral ideas uncorrected and unenlarged. In this, as in other fields, "the thoughts of men are widened by the processes of the suns." A new moral conception, although the novelty may arise only from the improved statement or application of a principle as old as the creation, will oftentimes be to a community like "another morn risen on mid-noon," and disclose a world of injustice or unkindness where heretofore all seemed commendable and fair. Loyal obedience to the new and better view will perhaps set free some depressed class of society from disabilities and temptations which were dragging men to ruin as by a kind of necessity, and in a little time crown some long barren waste with an unexpected verdure. Alas, how many degraded classes are waiting in dumb sorrow for this emancipation! How many deserts waiting for this better moral tillage! It would be hard to say that our system of public schools has no part to play in this work. Paley is said to have complained (only in pleasantry, I trust) that "he could not afford to keep a conscience." Must the state too, and the state school, come down to this last stage of moral pauperism? Nay rather let our public teachers believe that non-sectarianism in its severest construction has no such meaning as this, but still leaves a wide vocation open to them in giving to the young the purest and best moral conceptions, and in so enthroning them in the heart that no subsequent years shall wholly obliterate the early lessons. I shall perhaps be told that such moral teaching is not religion, or that, at least, it must seriously fall short of what is wanted. Let those who so feel, ply with all diligence the other means within their reach to supply the defect. But high-toned morality is as necessary as dogmatic theology; nay, rightly understood—so understood as to include what we owe to God as well as to man—it is the practical end at which theology aims. It will be well if the teacher enforces the practical side of the Gospel as diligently and earnestly as the divine has been wont to enforce the theoretical and ecclesiastical. Nor need the teacher wholly ignore much less discountenance, the peculiar aids and sanctions of