

ardly meanness of the plebians for whom they died. But how, it may be asked, did the ancients under such a state of affairs attain to such heights of national greatness? It was the natural result of the individual characters of the people. The Gods lived in sensuous luxury, and their worshippers could not do better than imitate them. Wealth was the great means to the gratification of every desire. For wealth the poor became soldiers, and the upper classes politicians. By subduing and oppressing neighboring peoples they obtained wealth. With wealth came luxury, and in luxury they prospered—for a time. Meanwhile, in the great cities where were the seats of learning and schools of philosophy, the scales began to fall from the eyes of the people, and the hollowness and falsity of their religion became manifest. From the cities, the scepticism spread among all classes. In vain was it that philosophy attempted to fill the blank. Licentiousness and disorder took possession of all men. Then too the effects of generations of luxury were made plain. Mental imbecility and physical weakness became the characteristics of these mighty nations, and they began their downward course. But amid the darkness of this moral night there suddenly appeared the star in the east, the welcome harbinger of the day, which with ever increasing brightness, has been dawning upon the world for the last eighteen hundred years. The star of peace and good will among men. The dawn of Christianity which is the essence of our civilization, and whose qualities require here neither our description nor our praise.

Having now treated of two of the leading elements of social progress, we come to the third and most important—popular education. And keeping in view the fact, that by education we mean not simply the instruction of children, but the development in every class of the people the true idea of their own welfare, it will not be difficult to see, that in the abundance of this element in modern society

lies the true distinction between ancient and modern civilization. For it is an element, the scarcity of which has undermined the greatest monuments of national power, and the wide-spread diffusion of which alone, can form a solid basis for the successful structure of all systems of social happiness. We do not by any means assert that the civilized people of antiquity were utterly devoid of education. But it will be allowed by every student of history, that nearly all the refinement of the ancients centered in their large cities, while the agricultural portion of the population, which in Greece and Italy constituted the great body of the nation, continued to live in a state of the crudest simplicity. Moreover, even the refinement and learning which flourished so promisingly in the capitals of the ancient world, was not favorable to the vigorous growth of civilization. For, as has already been mentioned, their culture was of a purely æsthetic nature, which might not inaptly be compared to the brilliant growth of a hot-house plant, which blooms and withers long before its kind have made their appearance in the course of nature's laws. In their appreciation of the beautiful and the sublime, and in their attempts to give utterance to that appreciation, the ancients have never been surpassed. They produced a literature the purity and beauty of which, have been a fountain whose waters have been drawn in an unceasing stream by the writers of all succeeding ages. Their sculpture and architecture too have become universal models. Added to such refining tendencies were the absence of all actual restraints on the expression of public opinion, and a physical and mental hardihood which did much to build up their greatness. Possessed then of all the advantages and means of intellectual improvement, the average Athenian or Roman cannot well be said to have been ignorant. But familiarity with literature and the fine arts does not imply education in our sense of the term. For with all their æsthetic culture, the entire