



POLITICAL MORALITY AND RELIGION

AN Australian journalist looked me in the eye the other day and said that in Australia they have no "graft" in their politics. No "gra—" why, what, in Heaven's name, do they have politics for out there on that benighted island continent? Imagine politics without "graft"! What can keep "the boys" busy? How are the organisations held together? Who does the work in the wards, and what do they hope to get out of it? Do you mean to tell me that men will sit up nights, smoke campaign cigars, leaf over thumb-marked voters' lists, and get out and canvass the voters, to say nothing of rushing around like mad on election day to bring them to the polls, if there is nothing going to be "passed" after the dust of the conflict has settled? Why, it is absurd. You might as well pretend that you can keep a factory going without pay-day. Men are not in politics for their health—and when they have absorbed a glass or two of "political influence," they do not mind telling you so, as a rule. All work and no pay would make the political "Jack" an absentee.

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OF course, I asked the Australian how they did it. And he tried to tell me and be polite at the same time. Politeness is very frequently an enemy to lucidity; and I am not certain that I quite caught the idea. He seemed to think that some of it was due to our "foreign vote"—of which we have precious little in old Canada—and that some more could be blamed on the "American example." I am not entirely sure whether he blamed the climate for it or not. We certainly discussed climate comparatively; but it may have been in relation to something else. I offered an explanation on my own account; but he didn't seem to think that it explained. I said that we were so busy getting rich in this country that we did not have time to chase off the politicians when they robbed us of a few pennies a-piece. But he replied that, in Australia, they were more indignant at being robbed of a quarter of a farthing by a public man than if they were held up personally in the street and relieved of their pocket books. He seemed to think that it had something to do with "the principle of the thing."

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"PRINCIPLE!" That word had a familiar sound. I am sure that I can recall hearing it applied to public affairs before in my time; but it must have been when I was very young—when the country was not so full of "booming" money-making schemes as it is to-day—when people took life seriously and expected public men

to be bound by their professions. Why, I have even a dim recollection of hearing political leaders arraigned very severely for not doing what they said they would do. I am afraid that I must be very old. That is getting back into the idyllic days of pure politics and real party issues and—why, yes—and principles! I can well remember my grandfather talking about political principles. There were Liberal principles and there were Conservative principles in those misty ages before the flood—of prosperity—and it did make a difference which party was in power. It does to-day in Britain; and, by that same token, they do not have "graft" over there. Possibly the presence of "principles" in Australia may have something to do with the exclusion of unprincipled politicians.

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HE also said another funny thing—if I understood him rightly. He intimated that they did not go much on religion out in Australia. On Sundays, they make family parties and journey out into the country and worship "the great god Pan." Probably my hearing was at fault; but that was the impression he left with me. But how can they possibly have high political morality without religion? Or, perhaps, we had better put it the other way. Why do we have low political morality with so much religion? When I was a boy, I used to hear the preachers say that about the worst thing a man could be was to be "moral" without being "religious." I think they were in habit of attaching this doctrine to the notorious case of the Pharisees to whose morality they pointed as utterly failing to suffice them as a substitute for their lack of religion—i.e., their failure to recognise Christ. It seems to me on second thoughts that possibly the Pharisees had more religion than morality, judged by their own standards—but that is what the preachers were accustomed to say. Now if morality without religion is worse than house-breaking, what about religion without morality?

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BUT to return to our mutton—this question of "graft"—what have we got to say about it anyway? There is no use denying that we suffer from "graft." Each party confesses that the other is saturated with it; and our last elections were run on little else. Yet the people of the British Isles manage to spend the revenues of an Empire pretty well without it; and now here comes this Australian who insists that they hardly know what it means on his continent. Nor do I fancy that there is much "grafting" going on in Germany. What is the matter with us anyway? It is hardly satisfactory to say that we are so busy getting rich that we have no time to keep our representatives honest. The very fact that we value wealth should make us doubly anxious to make sure that it is not stolen; for we may be very certain that if we once permit our public representatives to believe that they may steal pennies with impunity, they will presently begin to steal something much more worth while. We ought to send a Commission to Australia to find out how they do it.

THE MONOCLE MAN.



A New "Transportation" Building now being erected on the Exhibition Grounds, Toronto. Cost, \$95,000. Size, 337 feet by 153 feet. Materials, Steel, Red Brick and Stone Trimmings. Architect, Mr. George W. Gounlock. Corner Stone Laid last Monday.