

*THE SPIRIT OF THE TIMES.*

Perhaps some apology is required for attempting the discussion of a subject so profound as that of the characteristic features of an age and which demands a thorough knowledge of history, modern and contemporary, together with a keen insight into the secret workings of human nature. To none of these qualities does the writer lay claim, nor is it the scope of this article to treat the question with all the depth of a political philosopher; yet he would be blind who with any sensitiveness to the events that are daily occurring about him, and who has taken even only a glimpse over history or has regarded with a critical eye the monuments that are still left us of the past ages, should not have remarked that these times of ours are moved by a spirit differing in many respects from the principles that impelled our forefathers. Every age since the beginning of the world has had its specific nature, and it would hardly be reasonable to suppose that we who boast so much of our progress and activity should not preserve, in common with the centuries that have passed, at least this one resemblance which all epochs have had to those which preceded them, viz., that of being different from them.

Progressive and agitated the nineteenth century certainly is. Multitudes have inscribed their names in the Temple of Fame, and have gained renown for their scientific discoveries, inventions and skill in the arts. Yet, as a celebrated author remarks, science may raise to worldly eminence but virtue and religion alone can guide to true greatness; and hence it is that many of the names which the world holds in awe to-day, if subjected to a strict examination by the criterion of real worth, would be found to be

great not in the beneficial results they have worked on society, not in any good they have done, but rather in their power and eagerness to work destruction. Ambition is the animating spirit of the age; genius, the god which the world adores and to which it blindly sacrifices principles absolutely necessary for the preservation of the well-being of man. Here is to be found the reason why so many seek to become leaders in some sphere of activity; no opinion is too ridiculous to be supported, and the ingenuity of a theory is a sufficient reason for accepting it as the explanation of certain phenomena. If the tendency of former ages was to reject the truths of science or to regard them with suspicion; if those times were marked by a tenacious adherence to long established maxims and were so much swayed by superstitious beliefs and prejudices, the credulity of the modern populace in every new-fangled scheme seeks on the contrary to efface all traces of the past in the precipitous onward rush. Like a devastating host does the world advance, endeavoring to throw into the darkest oblivion the morals of history, and to uproot every germ which in future time might give growth to progress and prosperity, planting in its stead the seeds of disintegration and decay.

Rationalism, liberty unrestrained, and irreligion, the legitimate off-spring of the Reformation, are the cause of the many outrages committed against society. It must be admitted that liberalism is much more widely disseminated in so-called Catholic countries, such as France and Italy, than in England where Protestantism holds sway; but this is owing to the fact that the former have not been so much influenced by the fundamental principle