

### Political Ethics.

The epoch at which we have arrived in our national history and the necessary reflections and anticipations which it calls forth concur in drawing our attention to the doctrine of Political Ethics. As our majestic ship of state plows on through wave and billow, we are naturally led to inquire, What shall be her fate? Has her framework that perfection and inherent strength that will enable her to brave the fury of every storm and sail on into fairer seas? Or is she destined sooner or later to be wrecked upon the shoals in this hitherto unsailed sea?

Greece, the nursery and home of liberty, the metropolis of the arts, and the birth-place of literature, yielding to the irresistible allurements of wealth, became the habitation of domestic discord, of civil dissension. That vast structure of government, once the admiration of the world, is now a ruin.

"Tis Greece, but living Greece no more!  
So coldly sweet, so deadly fair,  
We start, for soul is wanting there."

In her brief, though dazzling, career, she tells what history continually reiterates, "Nations, like men, are born and die." Thus it is that the past projecting itself, as it were, into the future predicts the early decline and fall of this glorious Republic. We are ever forming a picture of our country's future: fear imparting her sombre hues, it is emaciation—death; hope lending her brighter tints, it is invigoration—life.

This country, on examination, is found to be a sagacious and harmonious coalition of three governments—two subordinate and one *general*. To regulate the affairs of a city or community, to make those provisions and improvements upon which its convenience and comfort immediately depend, some regime must be inaugurated. This gives rise to the municipal government. Such a system of rule would, however, of necessity be local in its interests, would be constantly tempted to infringe and trample upon the rights of other like institutions. Hence, the exigencies of the case demand a government of wider range than the municipal—one to prohibit and arbitrate all matters of conflicting interest. And this we have in our state governments. But commerce between different states and sections of country would still be held in check by serious impediments. Besides, there would be no protection afforded against foreign invasion. Something with still greater compass is yet wanted, something that has the protection and welfare of both individual and society at heart, something national. This all-comprehending institution we also have in the Republic of the United States, which to us has become a synonyme for everything noble and patriotic, "a thing of beauty" and "a joy forever."

The first thing that presents itself for adjustment in organizing a government is the delegation to an individual or number of individuals of its various powers and functions. Laws must be made, expounded and enforced, in other words there are three functions: legislative, judicial and executive. Wisdom and study of the past led the founders of this government to avoid the dangers consequent upon the centralization of these powers in one or even a class of persons, by constituting them separate departments with mutual checks upon each other and all indirectly under the control of the people.

We are now prepared to form some idea

of the culture and insight that should be possessed by those into whose hands the existence and development of the state is confided. To understand what the proper sphere of government is, to say how far it may go in prescribing bounds to a man's personal educational, or religious freedom are questions of no little difficulty, of no small moment. To draw a line between the authority of municipal and state governments, to determine with precision what relation they bear to the *general* are problems of vital importance to a nation. A glance at history shows that these questions in the past have been very imperfectly understood, and little regarded. The statute books of England and France have been frequently marred by laws displaying an ignorance of the fundamental truths of ethics and of the first principles of political economy. These emergencies can be met and these errors avoided in but one way, that is, by making them subjects of profound and penetrating thought. Let those who are called to perform the various functions of government be men with enlarged views, men capable of tracing all anomalies in the operations of human institutions to their remote, underlying causes. Knowledge, such as this, can not be acquired by a superficial observation of phenomena. No; it is labor—it is severe, critical, mental labor alone that can procure it. Among those who have occupied stations of trust under our constitution, there have been many philosophical and classical scholars. Few, however, I apprehend, ever received that careful, special training that would seem desirable to fully qualify them for their positions.

The glory of a Republic is that it gives freedom to all in the cultivation of their own intellects—whose lists may have a mind free from perturbations and prejudices, capable of discovering and contemplating, with gratification, nature's mysterious laws, and so teeming with thought as to make it an exhaustless spring of ideas. This boon, however, which we cherish so dearly has its disadvantages. Man is created with two natures—a high, sympathetic and a low, selfish one. The character of the mind is such that there can be no development, no expansion of one class of these faculties without giving greater scope to the other. Increase a man's power to do good and you increase his power to do evil in a direct ratio. How often do we see the animal nature of man in the ascendancy? How often are we "presented that saddest spectacle of all that the sun beholds in his course about the earth, as mind endowed with capacity of reason and intelligence, but enslaved to its own base passions?"

Conscience, that unseen, marvelous power that slumbers within the bosom of every man, and restrains with gentle persuasion when he even contemplates the wrong, must be made to tower high over and awe into obedience the other elements of his character. Instead, then, of maintaining military schools to educate men to carry on war—war that spreads devastation, lays proud nations in waste, makes unhappy homes and lonely firesides—instead of this, I say, found institutions in which the youth of our nation may receive that political and moral instruction that shall fit them for the high rank for which the God of nature designed them. Then will our fair fabric of government, woven so peerlessly by the hands of our fathers, crimsoned by the blood of liberty-loving heroes, moistened by the tears of orphans and widows, become the elysian home of the true and the brave.

### The Mystery.

In treating this subject, we do not propose to enter upon a minute description of our antiquities, as many of them are quite familiar to the reader, but will confine our space to a few remarks concerning their character and significance.

An important difference is at once noticeable between the antiquities of the Eastern and of the Western Continents. In the Old World the monuments of the ancient nations often record their history, but in America such intelligible records are wanting. In the former case, it is true, civilization has frequently flourished without interruption around them; nations have risen and fallen around them, but their origin has generally been kept in view. In America, on the contrary, the mystery which surrounds them is nearly as deep to the native inhabitants as to us. The antiquities of the Old World are giving up the secrets which they have thus far retained, under the persevering researches of the investigator, and is it not possible that a like result may follow in regard to ours, as they are just beginning to receive the attention which they really deserve?

At the time of the conquest of Mexico there were vast numbers of old manuscripts in that country, which were destroyed by the victorious invaders. By this act of vandalism, which should forever disgrace the Spanish name, has been lost to the world, that which would undoubtedly have cleared up to an untold extent the mysteries which enshroud our ruins. The purely historical manuscripts were all destroyed, and only a few miscellaneous ones remain to shed a partial light over the past. By those who have investigated these and all other accessible records on the subject, the following is a meagre sketch of American ancient history.

The ancient inhabitants appear to have consisted of three races; the Chichimeis, Colhuas and Toltecs. The former, a rude people, ignorant of agriculture, dwelling in caves, were the most ancient people of Central America, and claimed to have lived there "from the beginning of time." The Colhuas came from the east in ships at a very early date. They introduced civilization and founded in Mexico and Central America a large empire. The Toltecs, probably our mound-builders, evidently settled first on our Gulf coast and thence spread over the Mississippi valley. In regard to their disappearance, we have only the statement that they were suddenly assailed by a wild race called Chichimeis united under one great leader. There was a terrific struggle for about thirteen years, but, unable to avoid destruction, the Toltecs fled to the Gulf coast, from which they went to Mexico, partly by land and partly by sea. They may have originally been Colhuan colonists, who after a long residence in a far-off land had become so changed as to seem a distinct people. They are said to have afterwards overthrown the Colhuan power, and to have made a division of the land in the year 955 B. C. Their power ceased and left the country broken up into a multitude of small states, three or four centuries before the Aztecs appeared. The latter are commonly supposed to have come from the North, but there is little reason for this belief while the probability is that they were at first an obscure branch of the other people, and that they came from the southern part of the country.

At the time of the Conquest the native

population of Mexico was evidently composed of remnants of all these races. It might be further asked, what people expelled the Toltecs from the Mississippi valley? The word Chichimec was a general term applied to any wild race. The Iriquois and Delaware Indians have a tradition, that while coming from a far distant country in the west, in search of a more pleasant land in which to settle, they found upon the Mississippi a civilized people called Alligewi. The Indians demanded a passage through the country, and when it was refused, fell upon and drove them down the river—they never returned. It would at first view appear that the Mound Builders and the Alligewi were the same, but other considerations make it doubtful. The Indians are not supposed to have peopled America a longer period than twelve hundred years, and besides, the Mound Builders and their remains are as mysterious to them as to us. There is reason to believe the Indians of the United States to be entirely distinct from those of the more southern parts of America, and also from the Pueblos of New Mexico. The people on both sides of Behring's Strait have many characteristics in common. This and the traditions of the Indians plainly show whence they came.

As regarding the ruins in our country, strange notions have prevailed; in the attempt to measure everything American by the standard which the Old World furnishes, the most unreasonable theories have been advanced. A certain old enclosure in the Mississippi valley may resemble a Roman fort; some of our mounds, Celtic barrows; certain tribes of Indians may have Hebrew, Greek, or Hindoo customs; and the conclusion is at once jumped at and defended by the most extravagant assertions, that colonies of Romans, Celts, Jews, Hindoos, etc. must have caused all this. Some otherwise valuable works on this subject are prone to such conclusions. Now if mounds of earth in our Western States should perchance resemble others found on the plains of Russia, would not that show that the similitude in the physical character of the two regions was productive of corresponding habits on the part of the old people; or must it necessarily be inferred that the same race positively produced them all?

Again, if the remains of the Mexicans and Egyptians should show a resemblance, would it not indicate that both nations had arrived at a like stage of civilization; or must it necessarily be inferred that the Egyptians erected all these structures? On a careful examination, the ruins of our country are found to be entirely distinct from those of others, thus showing that the civilization which produced them was original. It has even been contested by able inquirers that the crumbling remains of Copan and Quirigua represent the oldest civilization of the world. This may seem too bold an assertion, but with our present knowledge it cannot be disproved. When was this country settled? It is an interesting but extremely obscure question. For several good reasons, which for want of room can not here be given, it is inferred that not less than two thousand years have passed since the earthworks of the Western States were abandoned, while it is evident that a dense agricultural population occupied the same region for a very long period of time. Some of the ruins of Central America seem to show a greater age. If the old people came