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The Need of Moral Influence in Politics.

No one, we suppose, who has given much attention to the matter will be disposed to question the fact—as regrettable as it is remarkable—that the standard of morality commonly accepted in political affairs is much lower than that which men generally recognize as authoritative in their business and social relations. In the spheres of business and social life, both popular sentiment and the law of the land demand that every man shall respect the reputation and interests of others. But in politics men may caricature, misrepresent and vilify one another as they will in the effort to destroy confidence in each other's ability and integrity and so gain a partisan advantage, while many of the best people in the country apparently regard this political brigandage as a matter of course. Men too who would scorn to stoop to any base or corrupt transaction in connection with their private business, seem to be able, without any compunctions of conscience, to accept direct or indirect responsibility for wholesale bribery and other corrupt practices in connection with political elections.

Why such a double standard should exist, how it has come about that the principles of Christian ethics are not regarded as authoritative over conduct in the field of politics to the same degree as in other spheres of human action, are questions which suggest an interesting and profitable line of enquiry, but one into which we do not purpose to enter here. A more practical line of enquiry would concern itself with the means by which the evil which is polluting the public life of this and other countries may be removed, how the popular conscience shall be so educated that it will no longer approve or condone in the conduct of a politician, acts of the same ethical quality as those which it unsparingly condemns in the conduct of the private citizen. A part at least of the answer to this enquiry is contained in the word Education. The ability to exercise rightly the functions of citizenship in a free state implies intelligence, and every state in which the responsibility of government is committed to the hands of the people, is bound on the principle of self-preservation to insist upon popular education. But it should not be forgotten that to this end education of the moral nature as well as of the intellect is essential. Of any well-directed effort to this end there is far too little. In an article entitled, "The Slow Growth of Moral Influence in Politics," which appeared in "The Nineteenth Century," and was republished in "The Living Age" of September 15th, the Bishop of Hereford says:

"Throughout our whole educational system we find very little systematic training in the morals of citizenship. In other subjects it is recognized that the young must be trained and disciplined for the work of their practical life by systematic daily lessons, repeated and learned again and again—*decies repetita docent*; but we act as if our social and political morals were expected to grow without any such daily watering and tending; and the result is an attenuated and arrested moral growth, snch as may be constantly observed in political action, temper and opinion." Again the Bishop says: "There is, it might be alleged, hardly a school in England, including even Eton itself, which has been for so many generations the great nursery of our public men, in which we could find any adequate manual setting forth in detail the principles of social and political ethics in regular and general use, or any systematic course of instruction in such subjects given and enforced with the needful reiteration throughout the growing, impressible, character-forming years of early life."

What the Bishop says of the lack in England of adequate education in the principles and ethics of politics, will apply with still greater force to existing conditions in Canada. The results of the lack of such education are all too evident in the low ideals, the extreme partizanship, the small ambitions and the corrupt practices which so largely characterize the politics of the country. What is wanted is education through all the agencies through which a people may be trained into right thinking and right acting. The schools—both the elementary and the higher—may do much to inspire in the rising generation a wholesome patriotism, true ideals in political life and a scorn of corrupt practices. The better class of public men and of private citizens may do much to promote wholesome public sentiment and purity of government, by living up to their own ideals and refusing to countenance corruption for the sake of party interests. The press—and especially the religious press— may be expected to exert an uplifting influence. But as to the political press, it must be confessed that so far as a section of it is concerned, its influence at present is quite in the opposite direction. Nowhere do the evils of partizanship find more virulent expression than in the pages of the extreme partizan newspaper. The Christian pulpit also, we believe, has an important duty to perform in this matter. What is required of the pulpit, as of other agencies, is not merely denunciation but rather instruction. With the discussion of parties and policies, the pulpit has of course as little to do as has the religious newspaper, but it can give men a conception of their position as citizens, and their authority and responsibility as electors which will be an inspiration to them. The pulpit can insist with great force and effect upon the sacredness of the duties committed to the citizen and the elector, and the responsibility which rests upon him to discharge those duties conscientiously, intelligently, and in the fear of God. The Christian preacher, if he rises to the level of his opportunity in this respect, can make every member of his congregation feel that to accept a bribe for his vote would be a crime and a degradation to which no one worthy of the name of a free man could ever descend.

The evil of bribery and of corrupt practices in connection with political elections is so great, it is so debasing to public sentiment, so inimical to the highest interests of the country, so demoralizing to the character of those who have to do with it, whether as givers or receivers, so utterly contrary to religious teaching and unworthy of Christian men, that it surely merits the strongest condemnation from everyone for whom truth and righteousness have any authority.

The Danger of Self-Deception.

In our Bible lesson for this week we have an impressive illustration of the heart-searching character of the teaching of Jesus. His own reference to "the resurrection of the just," seems to have called forth from one of those who were sitting at meat with him in the Pharisee's house the remark, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God." The words were profoundly true, but on the lips of the speaker they were probably nothing more than a pious platitude. The thought to which the words seem intended to give expression, was that it would be a time of great blessing to God's people when the Messiah should come and when his kingdom should be set up in the world. It would be as though God should spread a table for his people in the presence of their enemies. The speaker doubtless felt quite sure that when that time should come every respectable Jew—especially every Pharisee—would be found in the blessed company of those who should "eat bread in the Kingdom of God."

The parable in which our Lord replied to the speaker seems intended to indicate that it is quite possible for men to deceive themselves with pious phrases, and to delude themselves by imagining that their attitude toward God and his kingdom is quite other than it actually is. It was possible for the Jews to persuade themselves that they were longing ardently for the coming of the Christ, and yet to be despising him as he stood among them; it was possible for them to talk about the blessedness of eating bread in the Kingdom of God, and yet to be refusing the invitations by which God was inviting them to come into closer fellowship with him and share his largest blessings. And so also today, it is possible for men to call Jesus Lord, Lord, and persistently neglect and refuse to do the things that he says, possible for them to persuade themselves that they are on the way to heaven, while the heavenly things that are offered them here they turn away from in contempt. The practical question which should come home to us in this connection is—Have we that singleness of eye, that honesty of heart necessary to discern and to accept the truth as it is revealed to us in the life and words of Jesus, or are we refusing the service and the fellowship which Christ is now offering men, and deluding ourselves into the belief that in some world to come we shall find it blessed to be forever in his presence?

In the parable our Lord indicates certain things which men make excuses for not accepting God's invitation to live in holy fellowship with him. They are the very things which the more respectable classes of sinners make excuses for refusing that invitation today. One man declines because the care of his estates is pressing upon him, another because of the urgency of business, and another because social duties and pleasures occupy all his time. They have no time for religion. But these are "excuses" merely—not reasons for declining the invitation. The real reason why these men of the parable, bidden to the supper, declined the invitation, was because they had no real desire to come, and they thought that they were dealing with one whose invitation could be slighted with impunity. If a king or some great man had invited them, that would have been different. They would never have thought of pleading their paltry excuses. But he who invites in the parable, is only "a certain man," whose invitation and whose messages the men bidden evidently think they can afford to treat lightly. So the Pharisees thought they could afford to treat Jesus. They recognized in him no evidence of royal authority. His preaching and his miracles made them uncomfortable, for how could they deny that the power of God was with him. And yet, who was this man of Nazareth that they should acknowledge him as having a wisdom and an authority above all the leaders and teachers of the nation? And for essentially the same reason the respectable sinners of this present age are offended in Jesus. They will be very civil to him if only he will not push his claims too far. They will occasionally invite him to their feasts. They will call him the Great Teacher, they will speak in kindly patronage of him. But he must not approach them as King or command their allegiance. He must not interfere with their real estate business, or their commercial transactions, or their social relations. The men who could sit at meat with Jesus that day in the Pharisee's house were willing by and by to crucify him. As the great drama developed, the thoughts of their hearts were revealed. So it is today, and it is well that we should search our hearts and see what is our attitude toward Jesus, lest in a day of judgment it should be revealed that we are none of his.

The parable also teaches this great lesson that the failure of some men to accept God's gracious invitation cannot thwart his gracious purpose. Heaven's invitation is not issued in vain. Its banqueting halls will not be empty. God's word shall not return unto him void. If the Scribe and the Pharisee disdain the call to the heavenly feast, there are those who will accept. They may be "the poor, the maimed, the blind and the lame;" they may come from "the highways and hedges," but there will be no question as to the honorable character of those who sit down to that feast, for are they not God's own guests? It is the grace of God drawing men into fellowship with himself that makes them honorable. To despise the invitation to eternal blessing which God sends us by his Son, is a supreme folly and self-condemnation from which we may well pray to be delivered.

Editorial Nots.

—In a note in reference to the opening of a new college year at Acadia, President Trotter says: "The students in large numbers are already on the ground and beginning work with zest and enthusiasm. Not all the Juniors and Seniors are yet back, but within a few days these will all be here. The Freshman class will be a good class, but not so large this year as it has been for three years past. An unusually large number of new students, however, are entering the Sophomore year, making that class considerably the largest in the college."

—The editor of the Boston Watchman has been reading the reports of many of the political speeches on both sides in the present Presidential campaign, and records his conviction that, for carelessness of statement, for incompleteness of reasoning and for liability to fallacies, the average political orator is incomparable. Exceptions are admitted; but in the Watchman's opinion, the rank and file of the speakers that are stumping the country in the interest of the various parties, do not begin to show the mastery of facts or the art of persuasion that the average minister of the gospel constantly manifests.

—The request which Commander-in-Chief, Lord Wolesley, makes of the people of Great Britain, to re-