

A CODE OF MORALS

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A Code of Morals by John S. Hittell

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BY
JOHN S. HITTELL.

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PREFACE

THE manuals of Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, though admirable in spirit and form, and the best works of their kind, were not complete moral codes when first published, and seem less complete now on account of the numerous and great industrial, social, political and religious changes of the last seventeen centuries.

Standing on the shoulders of the eminent men who wrote those immortal books, making use of their labors, and striving to appropriate the knowledge of our time and to put myself in harmony with its spirit, I have here tried to do for my age what they did for theirs.

JOHN S. HITTELL

SAN FRANCISCO, Sept. 9, 1888

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MORALS

CHAPTER I.

INDIVIDUAL DUTIES.

§ 1. *Morality.*—Morality, the science which teaches us to live happily, is a natural product of human reason and a necessary element in all human society. It is continually progressive and its development is an important part of culture.

We can trace its growth in history. We can see tribes in which it was creditable to rob or assassinate any one belonging to another village; in which homicide was the only road to honorable distinction; in which cannibalism, human sacrifices at divine worship, hereditary slavery, unprovoked warfare for slaves and cattle, the ownership of nearly all the land by a hereditary nobility, despotic chieftainship, ecclesiastical

persecution, and censorship of the press, were established institutions and were not only considered politic and just, but were blessed by the priests, as of divine origin, to last forever. The overthrow of each of these evils was an important step in moral progress.

Opinion has no direct ethical character, but it often has great influence on moral conduct. As aids to the general welfare of our race, it is important that all men should accept the ideas that the mental constitution of humanity is predominantly good; that it naturally sympathizes with suffering; that it admires justice and truth; that the toil indispensable to supply our physical wants necessarily develops our intellectual capacity; that this development brings with it, an increase of general morality and enjoyment; and that a law of orderly and beneficent progress pervades and governs the life of our race.

That human nature is predominantly good is proved by individual consciousness and general history. We detest the man who murders his mother, robs his best friend, or betrays his country; we love generosity,

magnanimity, philanthropy and patriotic devotion. Because man inclines to goodness, many of the greatest evils of the past have been overthrown, and many of the greatest evils of the present will be overthrown in the not remote future. The intellectual part of our nature is rapidly increasing in relative importance. The baser passions are losing and the nobler sentiments are gaining in their influence on human life.

§ 2. *A Moral System.*—Live a consistent life. Choose a system, suitable for the guidance of all men, and be true to it. Of moral systems, four of a distinctly marked character are before you for selection.

These are severe asceticism, crime, mean selfishness, and justice.

The first, very rare in modern civilized nations, commands abstinence from all amusements, and even from jovial conversation, from luxury, and even from comfort and cleanliness in food, clothing and dwelling, and from all sexual pleasures. Severe asceticism is a prominent feature of Brahminism and of Buddhism, and was at one time common among Christian devotees.

The second system, crime, is a violation