

Suppose, now, any one of the systems of government that were adopted by these ancient republics, with its military spirit, its slavery, and its religion, were to be introduced into New England. What a contrast to the systems of government, religion, education, and social life, which now exist among us ! Who of us would not rather choose any of the monarchical, nay, even of the despotic, systems of civilized Europe ?

After all, however, there were many noble hearts in those ancient republics, in whom the true spirit of freedom glowed, and who did all they could to impart true liberty and knowledge to their fellow-men. What, then, were the causes that counteracted their efforts, and rendered it impossible for a true system of freedom, or of education, to succeed ; which in fact marred and blackened the fair countenance of liberty and civilization with some of the most hideous features of despotism and barbarism ? The philosophical historian and politician have long attempted to answer these inquiries ; and doubtless some of the causes they have assigned were powerfully instrumental of such results : but they seem to have overlooked one great source of influence, and that is, religion. They speak, indeed, of the necessity of public virtue to the purity and preservation of freedom ; but they seem not to realize that virtue which springs not from religion is spurious and ephemeral, and that consequently, if the religion be false or corrupt, the virtue, the freedom, and education will be proportionably defective. True, the polytheism of Greece and Rome was the least offensive heathenism, modified as it was by philosophy and poetry, which the world ever saw. Still it was false enough, and pernicious enough, to permit opinions and practices inconsistent with genuine freedom and popular education.