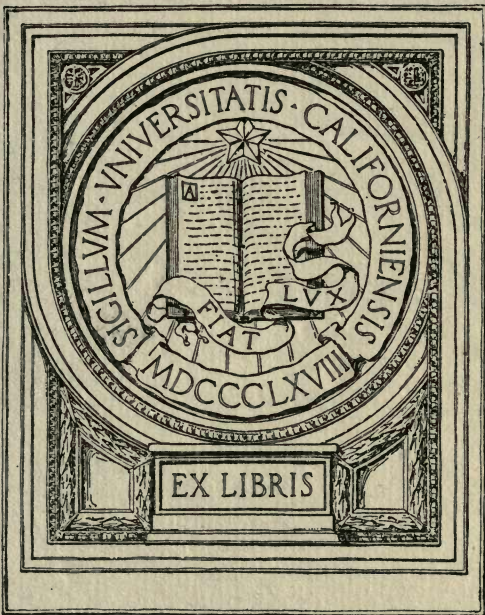


ESSAYS IN ETHICS

J. M. ROBERTSON

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ESSAYS IN ETHICS

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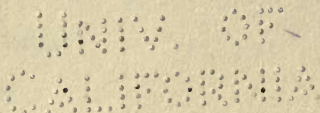
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CRITICISMS. 2 vols.

# ESSAYS IN ETHICS

BY

JOHN M. ROBERTSON



LONDON

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## PREFACE.

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THE following essays, as the headings tell, were for the most part delivered as lectures. Naturally some, if not all, were denounced by some who heard them as "essayish", and I hereby own the justice of the imputation. It is difficult to make abstract ethics actual, and no less so to keep applied ethics free of priggishness. Something went wrong, perhaps, when the term "ethics" was generally substituted for "morals." Given the drawbacks, however, certain problems have to be discussed; and the ensuing pleas seemed to me to need to be put.

Perhaps the case that now least needs urging is that put in the essay on "The Ethics of Vivisection," in part a criticism of positions which I believe are now abandoned by most, if not all, of the opponents of cruel experiments upon animals. But the analysis there undertaken is in itself, I hope, not useless; and in a Postscript I have sought to indicate what I consider the sound line of resistance.

Just as this preface is going to press, there is published the Rationalist Press Association's wel-

come cheap reprint of the late Mr. Cotter Morison's 'Service of Man', with an extremely interesting biographical preface by Mr. Frederic Harrison, on which I am moved to say a word, in view of the criticism I have passed on both Mr. Morison and Mr. Harrison in the essay on 'The Ethics of Propaganda' hereinafter.

On the 'St. Bernard' of Mr. Morison, Mr. Harrison pronounces that its treatment of its problem is "decisive, final, crucial, so far as history is able to decide. It is the life of one of the most perfect natures recorded by man. . . . It is a noble portrait of a real saint. And the brush of the painter is dipped in sympathy."

I will not here argue as to whether this fashion of settling a disputed question by emphasis of affirmation is or can be "decisive, final, crucial"; but I cannot refrain from comment on the claim that Mr. Morison did his work with sympathy. In the terms of the case, the sympathy was for one type, one ideal, one cause. I do not hesitate to say that it would to-day be impossible for any two instructed men, outside of the Comtist movement, sincerely to discuss the case of Abailard with less of sympathy than is brought to bear on it by Mr. Morison and Mr. Harrison. Neither in the modern Catholic Church nor outside of it has any-



one, so far as I know, handled the matter with such unmitigated animus. Mark Twain, indeed, dealing solely with its popular side, has recounted the Héloïse episode and its sequel with a natural indignation ; but on the question of Abailard as a mind, and on his relation to the mind and the movement of his age, it has been left to Mr. Morison and to Mr. Harrison, the one writing and the other discussing the Life of St. Bernard, to outgo all St. Bernard's posterity in the passion of their hostility to the man whom St. Bernard persecuted.

The truth is, Mr. Morison in his earlier days was always a partisan ; and to call his enthusiasm for his *parti pris* by the name of sympathy is somewhat to misuse the word. To hold warmly by one side in a dispute is the commonest of tendencies : credit for a special gift of sympathy is properly to be given to the man who can feel with the opposing side, the side to which he does not lean. And as against Mr. Harrison's claim that Mr. Morison did anxious justice to Gibbon and Macaulay, types with whom he was not spontaneously in sympathy, I am driven to repeat here what I have said elsewhere, that he did those writers, but especially Gibbon, flat injustice. In that stage of his development he simply could not deal fairly by types of mind which had never had

his own youthful bias to religious mysticism and fanaticism ; and his hostile verdicts on such types have for some of us, I am compelled to say, no more value than those of any religious fanatic. I do not dispute that he made frequent and laudable efforts to praise what he felt to be the strong points of the types he disliked : I am imputing to him not unscrupulousness but one-sidedness, zealotry, constitutional partisanism. In his latter years, I gather not only from his ' Service of Man ', but from Mr. Harrison's significant strictures thereupon, his early *parti pris* for Catholicism was profitably modified. But the fact remains that anyone who should discuss St. Bernard with such unrelieved *malice prepense* as Mr. Morison turned upon Abailard would to-day be pronounced an utterly prejudiced partisan.

Mr. Harrison in fact gives away the whole case when he tells us that Mr. Morison's ' St. Bernard ' was " written in sympathy, and it was prepared with sympathy, under the influence of three men—how very different, and yet each having much to tell us about an Abbot of the Middle Ages—Cardinal Manning, Thomas Carlyle, and Auguste Comte." It is necessary that some of us should bear testimony against the pretensions of these three distinguished teachers to speak judi-

ally on the problems of free thought, free speech, and authority. None of them has made the semblance of an impartial consideration of the rival claims ; and from the three in concert Mr. Morison could get a lead only to the championship of spiritual absolutism in the medieval world. Their collective "sympathy" was given to one view of medieval government.

For the rest, I am content to leave the case to be tried by the assembly of readers. It is a matter of deep regret to me to find myself still in opposition on this matter to Mr. Harrison, for whose attitude and doctrine on the great test question of the South African war I desire to express the most unqualified admiration. There he fought as hardly another man among us did or could for the great cause of Justice. But it is in the same cause, or, let me say, in the great twofold cause of Justice and Reason, that I continue to counter his treatment of a problem of the past which has a perpetual bearing on the present. I will say nothing on the practical anomaly of the part played by leading Positivists in holding up to odium, as the worst enemy of social order, the thinker, the questioner, the reasoner ; and in holding up to reverence as the model for humanity the dogmatist and the persecutor. I desire to go behind all ques-

tions of "sympathy" and appeal to the passionless tests of a science which a Comtist, at least, can hardly repudiate—the science of society.

J. M. R.

*May, 1903.*



# ESSAYS IN ETHICS.

## THE ETHICS OF PROPAGANDA.

A LECTURE.

(1897.)

TURNING over a newspaper file of five years ago, I read that at that time there was great trouble among the educated Hindu population of Bombay, on account of a series of handbills issued by the missionaries of the Bible Tract Society, gravely defaming the Hindu God Krishna. Public meetings of protest were held in temples, and a monster indignation meeting was to be held if the Government did not put an end to the provocation. How the matter ended I have not been able to trace ; but probably the missionaries were brought to order by the authorities, under the powers conferred by the Indian Civil Code for the prevention of mutual insults among religious bodies, as being likely to cause breach of the peace. What mainly concerns us in the present connection is, firstly, the policy pursued by the Christian missionaries, and, secondly, the position taken up by the educated Hindus.

As regards the missionaries, the action complained of, though somewhat abnormal in the locality, is historically typical. Nothing is more certain than that the Christian organisations have

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in all ages held up to odium and ridicule the Gods and creeds of other systems. The cue is given in Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians (x, 21), where he refers to the Holy Communion of a rival religion as the cup and the table of "demons". The original is not so violent in effect as "the table of devils", which is the rendering of the English version; but still it is disparaging, a demon being reckoned an inferior order of spirit, whether good or bad. And Paul's teaching was amply bettered by the fathers of the later centuries. I cannot recall one early Christian discussion of Pagan beliefs in which those beliefs are not at every opportunity treated with an unsparing bitterness of contumely and derision. It is not a matter of simple reasoning to show that they are unworthy: the Christian Father seems incapable of handling the theme otherwise than with a jeer or an objurgation at the absurdities and infamies he is exposing. The idea of respecting the feelings of the heathen, of doing as he would be done by, never occurs to him. And so far as we can gather from those documents expressly addressed to educated Pagans, the latter must have been in the habit of listening to bitter attacks on their religion with a forbearance to which believing Christians have rarely attained. Nor does it appear that their return criticisms were often in the key struck by their opponents. The rancor, the heat, the disrespect, are nearly all on the side of the "religion of love". Of course, official Paganism,

on political grounds, repeatedly resorted to violence against Christians ; but the temper of sheer religious resentment of so-called blasphemy seems to have been mainly confined to the ignorant Pagan multitude, who called the Christians Atheists, and to the educated and other Christians, who themselves habitually blasphemed the Pagan Gods.

Among the pre-Christian Greeks, again, we similarly find that the passion of resentment against all criticism of religion is special to the ignorant multitude and to those of the educated who made the highest pretensions to theosophic knowledge. Xenophanes had to fly from Colophon, and Protagoras from Athens, for moderately worded doubt and disbelief concerning the Gods ; and unscrupulous Conservatives like Aristophanes, themselves devoid of religious belief, were capable on political grounds of compassing the death of Socrates by working on popular bigotry ; but among the educated class the only notable type of homicidal fanaticism is Plato, who has always been singled out in Christian philosophy as the one truly religious thinker of antiquity. Plato it was who, in his Book of Laws, to the delight of Mr. Froude,\* laid it down that, though given religious observances may seem offensive, and stories told about the Gods may seem incredible, yet upon such matters the doubter must keep silence. " He may think as he likes about the legends of Zeus and

\* 'Life of Beaconsfield,' pp. 171-172.



Hêrê, but he must keep his thoughts to himself : a man who brings into contempt the creed of his country is the deepest of criminals : he deserves death and nothing less. *Thanato zemioustho*—‘Let him die for it’—a remarkable expression,” Mr. Froude observes, “to have been used by the wisest and gentlest of human lawgivers.” On which one would say that the last clause is a remarkable expression to apply to a man who in the first place was not a lawgiver at all, but only a speculator, and who in the next place proposed to meet with the last extremity of physical force criticisms of religion which he expressly admitted to be true, and of which he himself had in earlier life produced examples. It may be argued that Plato is here exhibiting his political rather than his religious side. But the truth is that in his case the fundamental instinct plays indifferently through the two channels, and the religious consciousness comes to be shaped by the same forces as shape the political. It is characteristic of the ‘Laws’, as Grote has noted, that there the older Platonic doctrine as to conduct and politics is “much more merged in dogmatic theology than in the other dialogues” ;\* and that his proposed penal laws are “discharges of ethical antipathy and hostility against types of character conceived by himself”.† In the words of the same just

\* ‘Plato and Other Companions of Sokrates,’ ed. 1885, iv, 276.

† *Ibid.* p. 411.



critic : " Plato begins his career with the confessed ignorance and philosophical negative of Sokrates ; he closes it with the peremptory dictatorial affirmative of Lykurgus ".† Mr. Froude, on study, might have recognised the parallel to his own intellectual career, and to that of his modern master.

Plato's development has indeed its tragic side. It was after seeing the utter failure of his philosophy to rule aright the conduct of rulers at Syracuse—after himself failing, through sheer excess of Puritanism, to turn to account his great political opportunity there with the younger Dionysius; after seeing his great disciple, Dion, fail similarly, for lack of political tact, dying by the hand of his co-disciple Kallippus—it was after all this demonstration that philosophers could not be kings, or kings philosophers, that in his old age the critic of other men's dogmatisms turned chief of dogmatists. The conservatism of Plato is the conservatism of despair ; and of that despair his veto on freedom of speech is the most significant expression.

What it broadly signifies to the retrospective eye is that in the idealist's ideal the inner spirit of Greek life was to become as that of the life of the despotic East—the type of intellectual unprogressiveness. It was through such channels of imitation that the spirit of dogma and persecution gradually flooded the Western world, long after Plato's time. The Christian ideal of intoler-

† *Ibid.* vol. i, *pref.*

ance derives from the Jews, to whom the change of belief had never come save by forcible pressure from outside, and for whom the aggregate of sacred books at length came to represent, in that inner life of sacerdotalism which political pressure could no longer affect, the absolute and unrenovable standard and storehouse of truth. And the later systematic intolerance of the Christian Church, which so long outwent in practical success all Oriental theocracy, represents in turn the application to the inner life, to the life of thought and speculation, of the political methods of the Roman Empire, the most triumphant development in Europe of the Oriental ideal of despotism, the most comprehensive check ever laid upon the forces of progress. One polity for all, with no possibility of strife—that was the ideal of the Empire, which disarmed its subjects to make them orderly, and so prepared the triumph of the barbarian invader. One body of opinion for all, with no possibility of innovation—that was the ideal of the Papacy, which kept men for ages unable to think, and left them unable to debate without resorting to mortal schism and world-wide war.

This, it will be said by some, is an unsympathetic view of the case, taking no account of the services done to mankind by organisation in times of intellectual beginning. Such a criticism raises for us the main question at issue: Is it ever wise, wise from the point of view of rational science, to — gag the tongue of innovation? Are we ever

rationally called upon to take up, in a civilised way, the position of Plato, and say that doubts upon any matter of habitual doctrine are to be suppressed, in the interests of the commonweal? Such a position has been taken up, if not as regards our own day, at least as regards the Middle Ages, by the school of Comte; and the principle is brought to a concrete issue by two able English writers of that school in the discussion of a very interesting mediæval case—that of Abailard and his ecclesiastical antagonist, St. Bernard of Clairvaux.

It is a little difficult nowadays to get any intellectual sympathy for Abailard. Not only is the tragic romance, which forever joins his name to that of Héloïse, so shaped as to put him perennially in the wrong; but the flaws of his character stand up in witness against him even on the intellectual plane. And faults always double in their weight and deepen in their blackness when their bearer is traditionally classed on the wrong side. St. Peter, in the Christian legend, basely denies his Lord at the supreme moment; but then St. Peter is held to carry the keys of the Church and of Heaven, and his place at the head of the twelve is not morally challenged. Robert the Bruce treacherously slew his competitor, the Comyn, in private parley in a church, violating the most sacred law of honorable intercourse; but then Robert the Bruce became the hero of Scottish Independence, and the typical patriot (who creates



the literary tradition) makes light of the crime as a picturesque feudal peccadillo. Saint Francis of Assisi, again, is recorded to have been brought to religion by a dangerous disease, the result of his youthful debauchery ; but Saint Francis receives none of the condemnation passed upon the lover of Héloïse. It is only the man on the wrong side whose sins remain as scarlet for posterity. The sins of Henry VIII may become as white-wash ; but not those of Abailard, who was classed as a heretic by Rome, without securing the favor of any other established interest. We must try to regard him for the moment, however, purely as an intellectual type, by way of trying in his person the question of the ethics of free speech.

After telling how Abailard, with an ample preparation in philosophical debate, took to critical theology, Mr. Harrison (proceeding on the work of Mr. Cotter Morison) admits that the critic was philosophically in the right.

“ A consummate logician had little difficulty in making short work with [the orthodox theology]. It hardly needed the acumen of Abailard to devise a conception of the Trinity, the Incarnation and the Atonement, at once more logical and more scriptural than that of the school divines. There was not much philosophy in that feat. It only needed a practised logician, with the unscrupulous cynicism and reckless vanity of Master Peter. At last he had aroused and alarmed the French bishops, then the true depositaries of all that was vigorous and lofty in Catholicism.”\*

That is to say, unscrupulous cynicism and reckless vanity were part of the outfit needed to enable

\* ‘The Choice of Books,’ 1886, p. 326.



a practised logician to frame a more logical and scrupulous system of theology; and when the depositories of all that was vigorous and lofty in Catholicism were confronted by this new theology, at once more logical and more scriptural, they became alarmed. On the next page, however, Mr. Harrison suddenly cancels the statements just made by asserting that

“The system of Abailard was *not* more demonstrable than the system he attacked. His object was only to replace a hypothetical system of belief, on which rested the civilisation of mankind, by a system just as arbitrary. . . . His dogmas were as gratuitous as were those of Bernard.”

“Just as arbitrary,” though obviously “more logical”. “Not more demonstrable,” and “just as gratuitous”, though clearly “more scriptural”—that is, on theological principles, better demonstrated. It seems impossible to carry on an argument from such premisses; so, without spending any time over Mr. Harrison’s various estimates of Abailard’s philosophical power, one turns to the more practical issue of the test by results, on which he thus pronounces:

“It was not till five centuries later that the Church opposed the development of science. To dissolve its dogmas, whilst science was unborn, was an objectless work of destruction. In Voltaire’s time the Church was the enemy of progress; in Abailard’s, it was its life. In Luther’s time the Church was systematically corrupt; in Abailard’s, it was the chief check upon corruption. Luther attempted some reorganisation of society; Descartes laid the basis of scientific philosophy; Voltaire attacked a persecuting system with courageous humanity; Abailard did none of

these. He did nothing to promote science, of which he was ignorant; and he only unhinged society, which he did not understand.”\*

And again :

“His only work was to paralyse the moral sense of his age, without doing anything to give a true direction to its thought. The part of the Catholic system which it was then quite premature to replace—its dogma—he did much to darken; that part of it which was then *most desirable to elevate—its discipline*—he did all he could to undermine. The small residuum of truth he uttered could have had, and was intended to have, no practical effect; the immense falsehood which his teaching popularised was to unchain the spirit of disorder.”†

Here we have, if an incoherent, certainly a forcible indictment. If this should fail to stand examination, it would seem difficult to make a case out against free speech on any other instance. The framer is a professed friend of progress, applauding alike Luther and Voltaire; he claims that Abailard’s position was morally the contrary of theirs; and only on that score does he in this one case condemn an innovating propaganda. Let us see, then, if the facts are as stated.

First of all, did Abailard “unhinge society”? Did he “unchain the spirit of disorder”? Mr. Harrison himself tells us that when the Council of the Church, after Abailard’s refusal to plead, passed a formal condemnation upon Abailard at the instance of Bernard, “*the question was practically set at rest by an authoritative decision,*” ‡ and Abailard died soon after, in the monastery of

\* *Ibid.* p. 327.. † *Ibid.* p. 328. ‡ *Ibid.* p. 329.

Cluny. How, then, with an "authoritative decision" against him, and with the question "practically set at rest", did Abailard unhinge society and let loose disorder? Further on, Mr. Harrison thus sums up the whole character of that time:

"The fact that stares us in the face, and which no satire can disguise, is that in the twelfth century men sought out diligently the purest, justest, and most earnest man they could find, forced him to tell them his opinion, adopted it after judgment as their own, and in all difficulties and perplexities waited for the sanction of their best and clearest mind."†

In such a society, then, how could one condemned and discredited logician, whom the mass of the people certainly could not understand—how could he unhinge society, undermine church discipline, and set up civil disorder? Mr. Harrison has told us that in Abailard's time the church was "the chief check upon corruption". On the next page, however, he states that the part of the church which it was then "most desirable to elevate" was its "discipline". Both of these statements can hardly be true. The indictment, then, begins to break down the moment we scrutinise it: on the very face of the case, some of it is incredible.

Looking further for ourselves, we find that the rationalising philosophy of Abailard was indeed spread far and wide by zealous disciples, but also that he was only one of many teachers who sought

† *Ibid.* p. 342.



to renovate theology, some of them in a far more drastic manner than his. A student who has really mastered the period, Mr. Reginald Lane Poole, points out that

“More intrepid views than his were promulgated without risk by a multitude of less conspicuous masters; Platonism was, in fact, the vogue of the day.”‡ “The scholars of Chartres, for instance, following their natural tastes rather than any general principles, pursued the study of natural science or of the classics quite regardless of theology; in practice they even travelled beyond the borders of Christianity, and Bernard Sylvester in his cosmology would only admit theological considerations under protest.”\*

Abailard came far short of such innovation as that. He taught that the Bible must be true; but that we are not bound by the opinions of the Fathers—exactly the doctrine of later Protestantism. In several points, indeed, he outwent average Protestantism, as in arguing that the divine light was to be looked for not only in revelation, but in man’s reason; † but he did not seek to discredit a single Biblical doctrine.

On the other hand, anything done by Abailard to undermine the dogma of Catholicism was practically as nothing compared with the popular propaganda associated with the names of the Waldenses and the Albigenses, which was already potent throughout Europe, and which at the beginning of the thirteenth century was suppressed

‡ ‘Illustrations of the History of Mediæval Thought,’ 1884, p. 175.

\* *Ibid.* p. 169.

† *Ibid.* pp. 153, 224.



by the Papacy by systematic massacre and devastation in Languedoc. These heretics attacked the dogmatic system all along the line. If Abailard was doing evil work, they must be accounted a hundred-fold more guilty than he. By implication, Mr. Harrison pronounces them agents of mere disorder. But in point of fact he does not once mention them in his series of contrasts, and, sooth to say, he seems to have forgotten their existence when he wrote his essay, though a survey of the period and its potentialities that leaves them out of account is very obviously defective.

Next, as to Abailard's influence on church discipline. So far from undermining it, he fought strenuously for reform, which was sorely needed. In this regard, too, he was one of many. Here, again, let us hear Mr. Poole :

“The men whose opinions the Church proscribed were just those whose activity was consistently devoted to the correction of the moral disorders from which she suffered. Roscelin, Abailard, William of Conches, are unsparing in their exposure of abuses in the state of the clergy which it was equally the desire of every earnest member of the order to eradicate. If Abailard's life be thought to be vitiated by a single fault, his colleagues are invariably blameless. The learned clergy are the exemplars of the age; the unlettered are its reproof. It was owing to the latter, to their degradation in life because in mind, that the Church stood in need of repeated, periodical revivals of religious discipline. The stimulus of learning was the least intermittent, and therefore the most trustworthy motive for moral advancement; but instead of fostering the seed of promise, the husbandmen of the Church rooted it up.”\*

\* *Ibid.* pp. 175-6.

And that this is not the view of an extreme Rationalist is sufficiently proved by the fact that within the Catholic Church itself, in modern times, the proceedings of the Council of Soissons, which condemned Abailard for heresy in 1121, are repudiated ; and those of the Council of Sens, where he was finally condemned at the instance of Bernard, receive only qualified approval.† It would thus seem that our Positivist friends are rather "more royalist than the king".

But let us go further. We have been told that Luther wrought no harm by *his* innovations: *he* was not premature. "It was not by puzzling good and sincere teachers of the people," says Mr. Harrison, "that Luther shook a corrupt hierarchy. Christendom cast off the vices of Romanism by returning to a more honest life and to the original virtues of the Gospel."‡ Again, what are the facts? Luther's Reformation, so far from purifying life, was on his own express and repeated avowal followed by the most grievous dissolution of morals throughout its German sphere. It was not merely that the Anabaptists fell into a license which revolted all their contemporaries: Luther bitterly testifies that all around him the standards of conduct declined ; and there is abundant other evidence to the same effect.\*

† *Ibid.* p. 165, n. 26.

‡ 'The Choice of Books,' p. 329.

\* Cp. the author's 'Dynamics of Religion', 1897, pp. 6-9, and refs.

Nay, by Luther's partial admission, his own doctrine of justification by faith had some share in the process ; many students think, a very large share. By that doctrine Luther assuredly did " puzzle good and sincere teachers of the people ". What can *not* justly be charged against Abailard can confidently be charged against Luther : his own friendliest modern biographers make concessions on that head. Then, as to the point of prematureness, we have the verdict of a score of scholars and thinkers, including Erasmus and Goethe, that Luther threw back the intellectual progress of Europe for many generations. Certainly the relapse of German civilisation in and after the Thirty Years' War was a disaster without parallel since the Dark Ages ; and that " spirit of disorder " was undoubtedly " unchained " by the success of Luther's schism.

It is hardly necessary to deal at length with the case of Voltaire. He was assuredly a beneficent and liberating force. But the remarkable thing is that every charge made by Mr. Harrison against Abailard has been made by a hundred writers against Voltaire, with at least a better show of justification. The unhooking of society, the unhooking of disorder, the undermining of discipline—these were, till the other day, the stock charges against all the French philosophers of the generation before the French Revolution. The modern answer to it all is that the true cause of the explosion was not the bringing of new light,



but the obdurate clinging of the champions of the old order to all its dangerous elements. The remedy became desperate because the case was kept so. And in the light of the rational vindication of the precursors of the French Revolution we see clearly the justification of Abailard, who, like Voltaire, was one of a band of thinkers bent on clearing the intellectual air. What happened in the twelfth century was that the forces of progress were crushed by organised clericalism, with the total result of delaying for four hundred years a measure of intellectual advance for which the best intelligence of the twelfth century is seen to have been fully prepared. It is mere question-begging to say that the attempted reform was premature. What is the proof? There is none, save the bare fact that the attempt was put down. But on that principle, the best thought of the best thinkers is always premature; and no less so the efforts of all the most zealous reformers. Wyckliffe was premature; Chaucer was premature in his exposure of the trade of the pardoners; Huss was premature; nay, Luther, tried by results, was ruinously premature. On that line of reasoning, where should we end? No reform could ever be broached until the vast majority were prepared to accept it without resistance—a *reductio ad absurdum*. To go no further: one would think that the last school to decry a propaganda on the score of its having been shown to be historically premature, would be the school of Auguste Comte, a teacher



whose hopes were as far ahead of possibility as any that were ever put forth by reasoning men. In view of his miscarriage, as of Luther's, we come to the conclusion that it is not a premature speaking of the truth that is to be guarded against, but a proclamation of error at any time. That was the vice of the Reformation ; and yet even as regards the Reformation we do not now argue against free speech ; because we recognise that the cure by suppression would be worse than the disease.

Against the Comtist verdict on the rationalistic movement of the twelfth century, then, we may squarely formulate this : that St. Bernard of Clairvaux, in the words of Mr. Poole, gave " an immense impulse to the growth of a genuinely superstitious spirit among the Latin Clergy " ;\* that the moral picture of him drawn by his adoring biographer and successor is thoroughly untrustworthy, being written very much in the spirit of the average ' Lives of the Saints ' ; that he was the unreasoning opponent, not only of Abailard, but of every innovating thinker ; that he hated all new thought just because it was new ; and that the ruinous Second Crusade, of which he was one of the most zealous promoters, did more to un-hinge society than all the heresy of the Middle Ages could ever have compassed. Finally, as regards civil disorder, it is very clear that the

\* Work cited, p. 16.

atrocious crusades set up by the Papacy against the Waldenses and Albigenses early in the thirteenth century — crusades not to be matched for ferocity and destructiveness in all religious history — were simply the application of the principles of Bernard to heresy within Christendom. It was he and his like who “ did not understand ” society, because he conceived it as something fixed and unprogressive ; and he is finally, at best, the type of the unintelligently pious opponent of all intellectual advance. His influence struck at all rational culture alike. Mr. Harrison tells us that it was not till “ five centuries ” after Abailard that the Church opposed the development of science. To this surprising statement it is enough to answer that at the beginning of the thirteenth century a council at Paris solemnly interdicted the reading of Aristotle’s ‘ Physics ’, † then newly made known to the Latin world, while the Dominicans prohibited every member of their order from studying medicine and natural philosophy ; that Roger Bacon, after being long protected by a friendly Pope, was imprisoned for fourteen years, solely for his work in science ; that Pope Boniface VIII forbade all dissection as sacrilege ; that Arnold of Villa Nova was made an outcast for his persistent scientific work ; and that in the fourteenth century, Cecco d’ Ascoli was buried alive for asserting the rotundity of the earth, which doctrine the

† *Id.* p. 225.

Church had been anathematising on scriptural grounds since the sixth century. If, as Mr. Harrison says, "science was not yet born", it was the foeticidal activities of the St. Bernards of the Church that had managed it.

Enough, perhaps, of the mediæval problem. It rises for us afresh every day. No man can undertake a propaganda that strikes at established religious opinions without being met by one or both of two charges: that he is undermining moral sanctions, and that he is hurting people's feelings. The first charge, though we have just seen it pushed against Abailard, is going somewhat out of fashion as regards contemporaries; but the second is pushed by many who energetically repel the first. It is heard even in the new ethical movement, some of whose members disclaim all propaganda for the establishment of scientific truth as against religious creeds, and stand only for the rectification of conduct. Perhaps the most impressive form of the argument is the plea that by shaking anyone's faith we at once inflict pain and destroy a moral support. This was warmly urged by Kingsley on a young officer who made sceptical remarks in his hearing; and the argument is endorsed in one of the letters of George Eliot. These are moralists of high repute. And yet even these, tried by the test of consistency, are found to have had no better basis for their counsel than the personal equation of the moment, the self-regarding mood of a particular mental and nervous



state. Kingsley had no thought of condemning a *Christian* propaganda which inflicted pain upon Pagans and took away one of *their* sources of comfort. George Eliot, even in her later emotional period, would not scruple to take away what she held to be unsound sources of comfort from *non-religious* people, or to pain *them* by holding up some of their opinions to ridicule. Similarly, Mr. Lang, who sharply condemns Renan for destroying the inner comfort of many Christians, is zealous to discredit and destroy the hopes of myriads of men for the betterment of this life—hopes which sustain multitudes through lives of discouragement and defeat. You must not disturb the Christian's hope of heaven; but you are free to jeer at all men's hopes for a peaceful and happy earth; and the more pain you give in the process, the clearer is the evidence of your skill in satire.

When the more distinguished pleaders are thus seen to be merely special pleaders, it is hardly to be supposed that the average person who repeats the formula is on a sounder footing. One is compelled, in short, to say plainly that this charge against rationalistic propaganda, of wantonly causing pain, is as a rule the merest *ad captandum* pretence, by people who themselves are only too pleased to cause pain to antagonists if they can. I have seen it advanced by religious writers in documents which breathed malice in every other line, and which never referred to a rationalist with-



out a calumny or an invective. I have seen it advanced by journalists who could not write a page without inserting a sneer or an insult at some one whose views they disliked. I am far from denying that pain can be, and is, often wantonly caused likewise in propaganda. The truth is, the effort to cause pain is almost normal in controversy. Our political life exhibits it every day and every hour. But, that being so, let us try to minimise the hypocrisy of charging it solely upon that order of propaganda which is itself most maligned, and which is in the main the most disinterested. It is the simple historical fact that every new phase of rationalistic thought, in age after age of the Christian era down to our own, has been aspersed in the most ferocious way by those who held by the established religion, professedly "of love"; and that if words could cause pain to the point of death, no confessed Freethinker could have survived his confession for a year. Even at this moment, when positive legal persecution for unbelief seems extinct, there are thousands of religious people who would gladly ostracise an unbeliever to the point of pecuniary ruin; and who do their part in that way wherever they can. It is sufficiently piquant that after they and their kind have done their worst from time immemorial against all who crossed them, we should to-day be told that it is an unpardonable cruelty to hurt their feelings.

But let us not make the question one of mere

recrimination. It has another and a graver aspect ; because a main part of the answer to the complaint against the hurting of feelings is this : that if mankind is to grow mentally at all, some feelings must be hurt ; and that he who insists first and last on the comfort of his feelings, in regard to any matter in dispute, is merely affording proof of his own ethical primitiveness. Every important advance in our knowledge of things has hurt feelings in the stating. People in this connection forget that the denial of Satanic possession, the discrediting of sorcery, the proof of the rotundity of the earth, and of the earth's motion round the sun—all aroused the keenest resentment, and so must be admitted to have given pain. Where, then, are we to stop? Certainly there should be a sympathetic economy in these matters. No grown-up man will lightly undertake to convert his grandmother on any serious issue. Pain is not to be given at random, for the mere sake of shocking. But of the incidental or contingent shocks of the intellectual life we must all take our chance, even as in the physical life ; and he who would fetter free speech on the bare plea that in certain cases it gives pain, is simply playing the part of an enemy to truth, and of a hypocritical enemy at that. It is only one set of opinions that are proposed to be coddled, never opinions all round.

Of course, people spontaneously assume that the particular set of opinions which they most re-

sent having criticised are on a different footing from all others. This is a primitive hallucination. The truth is that it is merely the feelings which are *seldomest* questioned that are thus resentful of collision. There have been times when an attack on the British Constitution roused quite as much ire as an attack on the Bible; when the term "Republican" connoted as much aversion as was implied in the term "Atheist". These were, of course, the times when political orthodoxy was absolutely in the ascendant, and political heresy rare—the very times, one would think, when common-sense on the orthodox side could best bear opposition with equanimity. The trouble is that it is not common-sense that rules in these matters, but the much commoner contrary. And so it comes about that the struggling cause, the minority opinion, where that is a matter of reasoning and not of mere acquired prejudice and self-interest, is usually by far the more serene under vituperation and insult. It thus comes about that precisely as Christianity loses ground in point of numbers, and is more and more criticised, its adherents become gradually less resentful of the criticism. This is simply to say that they grow more civilised.

If this should still seem an unwarrantable saying, let the objector just recur to the case of our friends, the Hindu worshippers of Krishna, so passionately excited by the attacks of the missionaries on their beloved deity—so anxious that the



Government should interfere. If the Government did, it would be on the express ground that the Hindu populations are not sufficiently civilised to permit of free religious discussion among them. He who takes up the Hindu attitude is simply asking to be classed on the Hindu intellectual plane. I venture to surmise, indeed, that ere long the educated Hindus will have learnt a better way, and will have resorted to a counter criticism of the Hebrew Jehovah and of the ethics of the New Testament. In which case, doubtless, we shall find the missionaries complaining bitterly of the way in which these heathens lacerate *their* feelings, and asking the authorities to interfere.

In all seriousness, the ethics of propaganda are simple enough if we honestly handle them, first, by the test of doing as we would be done by, and, next, by the no less important test of the memory of what we ourselves have done, and what we have applauded when it was done on our side. The test of "good taste", so easily turned against an opponent, so easily ignored in our own interest, should always be applied under these conditions. The late Mr. Arnold, who so often earns our esteem by his good taste, his refined way of putting things, observes in the preface to his most famous book\* that "There is no surer proof of a narrow and ill-instructed mind than to think and uphold that what a man takes to be the truth on religious

\* 'Literature and Dogma.'



matters is always to be proclaimed." This in itself is perfectly true ; and yet if the principle had been applied by Mr. Arnold to all his religious heroes, how hard some of them would be hit ! The Hebrew prophets whom he so eulogises seem as a rule to have had just the cast of mind which he here condemns ; and Christians have hitherto reckoned it altogether to the credit of St. Paul that *he* held that his truth on religious matters was always to be proclaimed.

It needs, then, that we bring to the problems of intellectual at least as much vigilance as we do to those of our civic relations. Unhappily, most of us do no such thing ; and there is no such checking machinery in the former case as has been built up in the latter. If we merely cared supremely about speaking the truth, and about *not denying the truth* when it is pressed upon us, the disputes over propaganda would dwindle to triviality ; for the faults of all innovating propaganda on the side of feeling would speedily give way if only the opposing faults on the side of judgment, faults themselves born of feeling, were less inveterate. Of this one thing we may be sure : our anger at attacks on any of our opinions, as such, is as sure a proof of *our* imperfection as any harshness in the attack can be of the imperfection of the critic. The flesh is weak, and will at times confound the ideal ; but all the same, the ideal is clear—the ideal which even in an unphilosophic age was struck out for the contests of the body

among those who claimed gentle breeding — the ideal of strenuous struggle without fraud, hard hitting without unfairness, entire freedom from malice in every other relation, and entire repudiation of all desire to work any injury beyond what is involved in the fair struggle itself. Such was the rule for the knight of old: the civilised man had need aim at least as high, in his usefuller strifes and his saner vocation.

# CONCERNING REGENERATION.

A NEW YEAR'S DISCOURSE.

(1895.)

IN the history of man, certain words, standing for certain ideals and convictions of a bygone age, in time come to stand out like old boundary marks for a new civilisation ; and dwindle from the status of reverend monuments, which are part of life for a devout world, to that of strange antiquities, held worthy of preservation in the museum of learning only on account of their very strangeness. And as it has so often fallen out in the physical life of nations, where a newcoming race overruns a region without driving out or quickly assimilating the old inhabitants, and leaves them in the worshipping use of their landmarks after the land has been quite otherwise divided, so it happens in the intellectual life that you may find one tribe of believers cherishing the outward and visible sign of an old dominion, to wit, a word or a doctrinal formula, in the midst of a new polity, to which the verbal landmark has no living relation. At best, those who cherish it can but surround it in fantasy with the mental life over which it once presided, and in their own case seek at times to do it honor and revive its significance. They stand in the shadow of a name. Such a fate, or somewhat such a fate, has been that of the religious word, and the reli-

gious idea, Regeneration. For the mass, even of thinking men, it has become a more or less impressive metaphor, not at all religious in its bearing. We speak at times of the regeneration of a party, of a business, of a society, as we speak of a concern having "new blood" put into it. The phrases are equivalent, and they carry no solemnity with them. Even in the language of the pulpit, where old symbols are longest in use, it has become a phrase like another for the ordinary listener, who at most vaguely connects the term "unregenerate" with habits of profanity. Even among the professedly religious, it is only the few who are still alive to the mystic force that once breathed in the words "born again".

But a great and mystic potency there must once assuredly have been in that withered phrase. To how many ears must it have carried a strangely solemn message: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. . . . Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." "Born anew" is the reading of the Revised Version; and already some of the solemnity is gone; and yet further the Revisers avow in the margin, as did the older translators, that the Greek may mean, "Born from above". And that is, perhaps, the true translation, "Born from above," or "Born from heaven". Here we are at once in the midst of ancient Gnosticism, which is as



clearly in evidence in the Gospels as in the lore of the later Gnostic sects so-called ; Gnosticism being in fact simply the spirit of original religious speculation, playing freely and ignorantly on the religious lore of the past. But although Gnosticism is for instructed men to-day almost synonymous with ignorant and irrational fantasy, as for churchmen it is synonymous with lawless heterodoxy, it is not to be forgotten that it signified for many minds in antiquity the deepest reach of spiritual insight, being, as we have said, a manifestation of the very spirit that framed all the religious systems, one after the other. And this fantasy of being born from heaven, it is easy to see, had a peculiar spell for the votaries of many cults. In the Fourth Gospel, the source of its influence on the later world, the doctrine is developed as fantastically as any Gnostic could wish : " Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh ; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. . . . The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth ; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." There the Greek word for wind is just the word for Spirit : we are in touch with a cult which carries us back to the primitive fancy that new vital powers are given to men by water and by wind. Yet out of all these primeval fancies, undoubtedly, there was built up an ethical

conception ; and the conception was ethical for the Gnostics commonly so-called who held it, and for the Pagan Gnostic cults which cherished it, as well as for the particular Gnostics who added those passages to the lore of the Christists.

It is not without profit to pause for a moment to note how perfectly childlike, how barbarically primitive, were those far-off beginnings of the idea of regeneration. The ethical heredity of man from a dimly enlightened animal is quite as well made out as his physical heredity ; and sooth to say, the tracing of it ought to give an enduring comfort to the thoughtful lover of his kind. For if man, with his ever-repeated desertions from his own ideals, his endless treacheries to his own cause, were indeed to be explained as a being fallen from a perfect state by his own inexplicable fault, then must his prospect be hopeless beyond expression. The forfeitures of the past can only be repeated : *deteriora sequor* is the motto of the race for ever. Its basenesses are but the expression of hereditary vice. But if it be that our kind has slowly arisen from the merest animality, and that the capricious admixture of good is the ever increasing play of something new, and not the forlorn flickering of something lost and irrecoverable, then there is a light of hope in the darkest place. Man's basenesses and benightedness are but the dwindling vestiges of the æons of the brute, and of the brute sophisticating into humanity. Our best current morality, if we come

to think of it, is not such that we need blush to trace it from anthropophagous ancestors, arboreal in religion if not in habits.

And so, when we turn to Mr. Frazer's learned and fascinating treatise on 'The Golden Bough', we learn without extreme astonishment that in the rituals of the most unqualified savages this idea of being born again is seen at play, and not without an ethical implication, as the ethic of savages goes. There the ideal of "dying in order to live", supposed to be a supernatural gift to one part of mankind, is part of the stock-in-trade of tribal sorcery. Among the aborigines of Australia, among negroes, among redskins, among the peoples of South American islands, we find the strange religious custom of treating boys at puberty as incurring new and supernatural risks, against which they are to be safeguarded by a process of initiation in which it is pretended that they are put to death and brought to life again. It is a regular annual ceremony, carried through with much earnestness and endless detail. Far from these barbaric mummeries, but without doubt on the same line of evolution, is the Brahmanic usage of pronouncing the Brahman "twice-born" on his investiture with the sacred thread. And of the same heredity, without doubt, was the initiation of the votaries in the great cult of Mithra, so long the formidable rival of Christism, in which a pretence of slaying the neophyte was part of the ceremony. In every case, the idea of



being "born again" is more or less clearly present; and there is no reason to doubt that in the old cults alongside of Christianity the idea had as much ethical content as it had in Christianity itself. To the primeval sorcery of the savage had succeeded the groping mysticism of the theologians and the moralists: the new birth was no longer a mere charm against evil spirits, it was in part a step towards a conquest of the evil principle in oneself. For many ages had men moved in this direction on the road of sacrifice and austerity, prayer and self-mortification. The idea that men become sainted by renunciation is no invention of Christianity: it is common to most savages and to all religious systems of the world. The current ideas of morality are to a large extent developments of ideas which may be termed pre-moral; ideas of sorcery and magic and demonic agency. And in the ancient ritual of the sacramental eating of the slain divine victim we have one of the points at which primeval mystic emotion joins hands with the instinct of moral betterment, the worshipper being held to be prepared by the mystic act for a new and better living of the present life, as well as assured of salvation for the next.

Let us not lose sight of the ethical aim because of the grossness and strangeness of the rituals on which it was grafted. Only by animal movements have men been able to rise above the animal to the life of reason. The great fatality



has been that the barbaric institution, being cherished in virtue of the spirit of reverence and faith, has served as much to bar the way to a higher plane as to foster the spirit which seeks that way. This ancient idea of regeneration, seized anew by the modern intelligence in the light of modern knowledge, may serve to express the highest reach of the moral instinct. But to do so it must be held with a new consciousness, far removed from the temper of ritual and mysticism. It must not be held as a ritual spell or as a sectarian password ; it must not be grafted on a dead tradition, an incredible faith. It must be a reasoned perception, deriving not as of old from ignorance but from knowledge. Instead of an act of faith it must be an act of doubt.

If we consider impartially the practical force, the bearing on conduct, of the idea of mystic regeneration in the ancient world, we shall see that there is small reason to attribute to it any wide transforming power. What regeneration meant for most of those who sought it was, first, the being saved for happiness in the next world, while the unregenerate were doomed to torture ; and, secondly, the being " dead to sin " in the sense of renouncing or controlling one or two carnal appetites. There can be no doubt that for the ancient pietists, sin figured mainly as an animal act, though lying and thieving and blasphemy were of course specified and denounced. That is to say, the believer had no perception whatever of his

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most vital defect ; since thieving and blasphemy were not acts he would be normally prone to, and his notion of lying was crude to the last degree. It is no doubt true that in the Gospels, as in a fuller degree in the writings of the Stoics, we have gleams of a recognition of a higher and a wider need and possibility of reformation. In particular, we have one or two phrases which are quite startling in the completeness of their assertion of the scope of the moral law : " I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment ; for by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."\* And again : " I say unto you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment ; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council ; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of the hell of fire."†

These, be it remembered, are Judaic and pre-Christian doctrines, like nearly every other sentence in the Sermon on the Mount, being found in closely similar wording in the Talmud, whose compilers would certainly not borrow them from the Christians. This consideration may help some to take a rationally critical view of them. And when we do this, it becomes clear that though the utterers had come within sight of an intellec-

\* Matt. xii, 36-37.

† Matt. v, 22.

tual morality, a morality of the mental life, they had no properly intellectual hold of it. Consider the futility of telling men that they will incur the ferocious wrath of Deity if they give way to wrath. Anger is to be checked by a menace of the worst extremity of anger. Recklessness of speech is to be checked not by rational reflection but by the threat of police prosecution or eternal torture. The threatener is in fact allowing himself the wildest possible licence of the very vice he condemns. And even if the temper of wise self-restraint were not thus flouted in the very wording of the inculcation, it is sadly clear that the general drift of the Christian scriptures, to say nothing of the Jewish, is not at all in favor of self-criticism of the fundamental kind, the checking of the instinctive impulse at every outlet by the second instinct of self-restraint. In the very mouth which is made to utter these menaces against vituperation and contempt, the same documents put tirades of the severest vituperation and contempt. The uncritical worshipper endorses these tirades blindly, on the score that they were justified. But such justification makes an end once for all of the precept of abstention from hard names, for the tirades are directed indiscriminately, against whole classes of society ; and for that matter the inconsiderate railer always supposes he is justified, else he would hardly rail. Comparing the precepts and the practice of the sacred books, we can but conclude that in that era



of ignorance and social dissolution, some men had glimpses of a strict morality, not only for the bodily life but for the mental life, yet failed even for themselves to relate their conduct to their momentarily seen ideal, and of course failed utterly to impose it on others. We have only to consider the material of which early Christendom was made to see how impossible it was that the idea of regeneration should be for the people anything but a crude notion of bodily abstention here and bodily bliss hereafter. We find Paul reproaching his converts at Corinth for that in their eating of the Lord's supper "each one taketh before other his own supper; and one is hungry and another is drunken";\* that they go to law with each other before Pagan judges; that some of them scandalise Gentiles by their family life. It must needs have been so. A truly moral race cannot rise fortuitously or by mere preaching on a basis of ignorance and social decay. If regeneration is to have a vital meaning for us, it must be through our thinking it out for ourselves, in terms of our own problems, our own vices, our own ideals, our own science.

What then should it mean? Is the symbol at all translatable into modern and rational action? I think it is. Even for the ancient pietist, it meant in part an act of conscious self-adjustment to life, as he saw it; a saying to himself, Hence-

\* 1 Cor. xi, 21.



forth I am a new man, acting on different motives, following not my own will and instinct but the higher law laid down for me. Given a modern conception of the moral law and the purpose of life, may not the modern set up for himself the higher and broader ideal of renewal which befits that? First, what is the great difference between the ignorant and the scientific, the pietist and the rational, conception of the purpose of life? Surely it is the substitution of a terrestrial for a celestial ideal: the purpose of re-organising the actual life instead of the purpose of securing safety in a future life after the speedy destruction of a world that is past redemption. Given that substitution, the individual ideal of reformation, of regeneration, must be made to correspond. First of all, it cannot be a mere ideal of the domestic virtues, of the management of physical appetites, and the avoidance of the crimes forbidden by the ten commandments. The normal citizen to-day is not a drunkard or a debauchee; if he is covetous it is a good deal by force of circumstances; and if he lies in the way of business it is because he does not see his way clear to succeeding in business otherwise. To regenerate him in these matters there would be needed an alteration of the social system. To this we always come back. The new purpose of life being a purpose of social reconstruction, not an escape from a doomed world, the ideal of the new life is above all things an intellectual ideal, and the new idea of regenera-

tion must be above all things a regeneration of the intellectual man, of the man not as a unit in relation to other minds but as a unit in relation to an organic aggregate ; of the man as a conscious part of a whole, and that whole not a sect or a tribe, but humanity itself.

The old conception of virtue and holiness as a mere repression of the appetites, a life of hunger and celibacy, with endless ritual thrown in, is here left a thousand miles behind. No nation was ever destroyed, or ever degenerated, through mere wilful indulgence of appetite. No nation, indeed, ever died of its vices : the physical force of another nation is always needed to compass even the nominal death of a nation as such. It is not the physical vices and the cruder crimes that we need most to guard against, but the intellectual vices which allow whole nations to sink in physical vice for want of intellectual salt. Even if the danger before modern societies, as before the ancient, were the danger of overthrow by outside violence, which it is not, the safeguard would still be in the intellectual life. We realise that a country which undergoes a crushing defeat even in a war of its own provoking may confidently be pronounced socially corrupt to begin with ; and the cure of social corruption is not a matter of governing the animal appetites and getting by heart the ten commandments, but of developing intelligence in all directions. Thus did Prussia after Jena ; thus did France after Sedan. If we

in this country really run the risk of military attack of which we are always hearing, our inner danger will not lie in not having more ships of war than any four naval Powers, but in the lack of disinterested skill and science throughout the nation, in the defect of a hardy and happy populace, in the multiplication of ill-fed and sickly drudges, in the chaos of blind commercial self-seeking. Rome fell not for lack of mere armies, but for the lack of a social system that could breed vigorous and self-respecting men, and the brains to lead them. Even on the militarist view of life, a view which is becoming freshly prominent among us at present, the needed regeneration is a regeneration through the life of the mind, a treatment of society in terms of science, a study of human life as a social problem, and not as a problem of individual creed and individual salvation.

But it is surely not now necessary, for thoughtful men, to call up the spectre of foreign invasion in order to gain heed for the social problem. To the most moderately considerate man, the deep social disease, the vast domestic misery, is matter enough for pondering, whether or not there be an armed enemy to come. And if on all hands we are thus driven to seek for an intellectual regeneration, we may without more ado ask what should be its method, what should be its fruits. It is not a matter of proposing programmes, political or other, but of calling up that frame of



mind in which programmes can best be studied and appreciated. We are at the New Year, the time of good resolutions. What resolutions should a good citizen make who thinks of more than his own individual betterment in the year to come?

Perhaps we shall answer the better if we go back a moment on our distinction between the intellectual and the animal life. Of course the distinction is broad and inexact. There is no clear dividing line. As our physiological psychologists teach us, the whole man thinks. The intellectual man, the sociologist, has his personal prejudices and predilections; he is not the purely impartial truth-seeker of his own ideal; and nothing can hinder that Tolstoy shall see life in the light of his liver-complaint and his ageing physique as well as of his creed and his logic. The intellectual life, then, has its vices of bias and egoism and temperament, like the bodily or the commercial life. We gratify our partisanship, our prejudices, as we gratify our appetites, or our covetousness. But that simplifies our problem. If the regenerate man of the ancient world was to look to his simpler impulses and over-rule them, we must in turn look to the analogous impulses of the life of ideas and opinions. We must not only seek consciously the best and highest: we must examine ourselves as to the rectitude of our search, the strictness of our criterion. And if any man thinks this an easy or a small matter,



we may say with Emerson, Let him try to live by that standard for one day.

To begin with, how many of us, meeting with a new doctrine in to-morrow's newspaper—not in the leading columns of course: there are never any new doctrines there—or meeting even a reiteration by a new speaker, or in a new speech, of a doctrine we have already rejected—how many of us will consider that new or old doctrine for a minute with an open mind, asking ourselves whether there is really anything in it, whether we may after all be wrong, whether we are doing justice to our opponents, whether it would not be wise to propose a compromise? It is perhaps not inconsiderate to say that the majority of our fellow-citizens will do no such thing. If we are to judge by the history of certain modern reputations, and of certain modern doctrines, the majority even of the men who concern themselves with new books and new ideas have nothing but animal animosity for any writer who strikingly calls in question their beliefs or their prejudices. No doubt the animosity is less brutal than it used to be. No poet of capacity could now be vilified and insulted as were Shelley and Keats by the Tories of their time; no scientific theory, even if unamiably set forth, could meet with such ferocious obloquy as was cast by religious people on the earlier works of Darwin, the most amiable of innovators. Stupidity itself has progressed: it is wittier than of old. But it remains the spon-

taneous habit of most men to meet with scorn or sneer every doctrine, nay, every form of literature or art, which does not chime with their established tastes, never dreaming that it can be their duty to hear it and study and weigh it with scrupulous concern for justice.

This certainly holds true of the bulk of those whose profession it is to review new opinion, new art, new theory. No doubt the common run of journalistic criticism is below the common standards of criticism of instructed people, because journalism, with its immoral and humiliating commercial conditions, tends more and more to repel scrupulous men, and the men whom it does not repel are not likely to feel special concern for fairness towards opponents. But journalism, after all, only follows the ordinary drifts of opinion; the Press is an echo of the platform; and the platform rests on the average of the classes and masses. If most people were not recklessly unjust to opinions or arguments which clash with theirs, the newspapers could not falsify and asperse and misrepresent as wantonly as they do. The vice is normal. Now, as that very vice is its own means of perpetuation; and as the spirit of malice among men is the sure barrier to their general well-being, it is very evident that the cure must arise in a new consciousness, resting on knowledge. The mere growth of amenity of tone, though that is a great thing, is certainly not enough. Some admirable cultivators of amenity

have shown very little concern for fairness ; and well-mannered disingenuousness is only less disastrous to a good social understanding than ill-mannered disingenuousness. There must be painstaking over the matter of a criticism as well as over the manner. There must be at least the glimmering of a sense of shame over a flat inconsistency. There must be an awakening to the idea that to misrepresent a man is about as unworthy as to cheat him at cards ; and that to stand obstinately to a chance misrepresentation when it has been brought to your notice is as ignoble as it would be to deny an error in play or business when you have profited by it. In short, we want an intellectual ethic, an intellectual new birth.

We have no lack in this country of loud and austere criticism of a few forms of wrong-doing which a century ago went unreproved. Even in these matters there is sufficient of gross inconsistency ; and the most real political wickedness is openly condoned by moralists who wax prophetic over personal offences often much more conventional than real. Puritanism, which once meant a great deal more than prudery, has latterly come to stand for little else ; and we find people seriously justifying the abandonment of a great political scheme on the score that the leader of a party which chiefly promoted it has been in the divorce court. It is not that they think the scheme bad : on the contrary, they had been supporting it as a measure of beneficent reform : what



they are thinking of is the sin of co-operating with "a bad man". The welfare of a whole race is thus confessedly treated as of no account whatever in comparison with the duty of repudiating an "immoral" politician: as if this casting-off of the cause of despairing millions were not an immorality of the worst sort. In this particular matter, as it happens, Protestantism and Catholicism have joined hands; but the act, broadly speaking, savors much more of Protestant than of Catholic practice; and it is well to keep before our thought the specific dangers of evil action that accrue to our particular conventional code. To let habit do the work of judgment, and to take for licit all that is not customarily banned in the pulpit, is merely to let the moral sense atrophy. And there are always some who find their account in so doing. Politics seems to be a perpetual school of demoralisation, witness some perfectly matter-of-fact revelations which have lately been made of the ethics of American political management. We learn, from an apparently well-informed, temperate, and careful writer, that a local party-leader, with a high repute for the popular Christian virtues, a blameless family man, a total abstainer, and a regular communicant, has been known to ruin another, all in the way of party policy, by a planned series of private falsehoods and treacheries worthy of the ideal scoundrels of the Italian Renaissance. We shall do well to keep before us these samples of what Pro-



testant morality can attain to, of what the Puritan ethic can putrefy down to, when deprived of the daily light and air of fresh reason and new science. It can grow abominable for sheer lack of vivifying mind.

But if the mere Puritan instinct for certain forms of conduct can go thus frightfully astray, what is the likelihood that tradition and emotion will save us from utter licence in the intellectual life, considered as far as possible in itself? We have only to look around reflectively to see men who hold it their mission to correct immorality of one kind, themselves falling every day into a hundred sins of false judgment, false inference, false guidance, false criticism, false representation of fact. If the bad example of one man, in what we may call the personal life, can encourage or lead astray the tens, the bad guidance of such leaders of opinion in the intellectual life can confirm in unreason the thousands whose conception of social science will determine the next stage of society. It can be no justifying answer, on behalf of such a loose and incompetent thinker and teacher, to say that he is acting up to his lights. Half the vice he condemns is just as spontaneous and as unrepentant. If we are to sit in the chair of judgment, let us, in the name of righteousness, judge *every* line of action, every indulgence of impulse, every human self-gratification, with an eye to its consequences. Let us not call a bodily appetite a lust, and there an end, while we allow

an ungoverned bias and egoism of speech and doctrine to pass as blameless because self-satisfied. Surely, of all ways in which we can be "materialist", this course of applying moral tests only to bodily actions or to intellectual actions which directly affect bodily interests, is "materialistic" in the most discreditable sense.

But such a standard, I confess, seems so remote from average feeling and practice, that some are likely not only to put it aside, but to find it unintelligible. Broadly speaking, we have arrived in our ethics at governing or proposing to govern the animal life by intellectual considerations, while we think fit to carry on the more strictly intellectual life, or a great part of it, in the non-moral fashion of the animal. In our very ethics, three times out of four, most of us express an inherited sentiment or prejudice rather than a dispassionately reasoned conclusion. And as there is so little anxiety about being vigilantly right, there is little remorse about being wrong, even when error is recognised: at least there is small thought of retractation. The old churches, with their old ethic, prescribed confession and penance for the sins of the flesh and the conventional sins of the spiritual life; and some have proposed the revival of these institutions on a public and non-ecclesiastical basis. But who proposes a confessional or a penance for reckless indulgence of prejudice, for uncritical belief, for scornful rejection of a creed or of a criticism without any candid examination

of its value? Who ever says or sighs, I fell there into a gross fallacy ; I fought for a sophism ; I vilified an honest reformer ; I did my best to dishearten a disinterested artist, and all out of inconsiderate prejudice and mental sloth : who makes these confessions even to himself, much less to the world? Instead of any leaning in that direction, we have ostentatious attempts to justify the unreasoning in their irrationality — treatise after treatise arguing that the sufficient justification of a creed is that it feeds the cravings of those who hold it ; that it is not to be tried by the tests of evidence or of consistency ; that the believer is a law unto himself in respect of his own interpretation of his own inclinations.

If a drunkard were thus to justify his alcoholism, *his* craving for nervous stimulation ; if a new sect, reviving the Antinomianism of the early and Middle Ages, were to announce that they held themselves free in Christ to follow all their desires ; if a philosopher pressed the idea of self-development to the point of saying that what others call vice is for him a pleasing experience like another, and that he will listen to no criticism, all other men would call it the very effrontery of lawless egoism. Yet this is the very spirit which, in the intellectual life, refuses to try certain pleasing beliefs by the standards by which men try all other beliefs. If any man were to assert that a doctrine in geology or botany is justified by the fact that it satisfies some people's senti-



ments, and that mere reason and proof are not to be listened to as against the inward satisfaction of believing, the spiritual sense of rightness, he would be regarded as beneath derision. Yet he would only be saying something strictly equivalent, in ethics and in logic, to what is being said afresh by a dozen serious writers on religion year after year. Of course we know that these writers are "sincere" and self-satisfied. Let the point be duly insisted on; and let us remember that the Antinomians of the past, from the converts of Paul onwards, were sincere and convinced and self-satisfied. It is not a matter of allotting blame, but of tracing consequences. And if Christian Antinomianism, or rejection of law in matters of personal action, tended in the past to the dissolution of society, we may be very well sure that the new Christian Antinomianism, which rejects the laws of reason and proof in matters of belief, can tend only to prevent society from evolving to a happier state. Half of the solid suffering of mankind comes of want of effective intelligence, want of intelligent accord, want of exact calculation. We may depend upon it that we shall never remove much of that solid suffering until we make as great a difference between our intellectual habits and those of our ancestors as we do between our methods and theirs in physical science. The abstruse alchemy of human relations will never be mastered by bringing to their study less of precision and impersonal concern



for truth than the alchemists of the Middle Ages brought to the very beginnings of chemic science.

If we reck our own rede in this matter, however, we shall have to anticipate reasonable objection ; and two objections do suggest themselves. First, is it not prescribing an impossible perfection to men who in the terms of the case are not aware of their misdoing, and cannot hold the ideal : is it not, in Voltaire's phrase, a revival of " the insane project of being perfectly wise " ? And, again, is there not a danger that an intellectual habit of constant reconsideration will leave a man sceptical of all things, without convictions, impotent ? Clearly, we may go astray in these ways. But I do not think the danger is freshly created by the prescription in hand. It is not, to begin with, a prescription of a quite new principle of action. Everybody admits that everybody ought to be fair and candid, ought not to be bigoted, ought to have an open mind for truth : even the Catholic who is taught to give no ear to sceptical argument is also taught to condemn the unbeliever who will not listen to Catholic truth. Even those who rush to a new treatise which promises to show them that irrationality is rational, and reason unreasonable—even these are in a confused way doing homage to the supremacy of reason. They want to satisfy themselves that they are somehow right. And everybody nowadays admits that it is wrong to falsify, to misrepresent. And although we find that a con-

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stant profession of concern for truth went along with a constant resort to forgery and interpolation among the pious compilers of the Jewish and Christian sacred books, so that we can never, without anxious scrutiny, trust a single ancient document as being what it purports to be — still the modern sense of truth and justice has been developed sufficiently to make the ideal of intellectual purity a possible one for many. It needs, perhaps, that they should first learn how enormous is the harm that can be done by false reasoning. Even as false religious ideas, insane conceptions of revelation and divine devolution, have led to immeasurable bloodshed, so false economic ideas in the past have slain millions of men and destroyed untold wealth, while later fallacies of economic reasoning, albeit not directly implicated in bloodguiltiness, have sanctioned and will sanction blunders of social action which mean the misery of millions more. The platitude that “ Evil is wrought by want of thought as well as want of heart ”, kindles into a lurid record when you realise how much it can mean.

Doubtless the discipline that would avoid such evil is hard. It is only the mystic hallucination of righteousness that comes easy. The late Mr. Froude has recently been quoted as saying in talk that “ It’s easy enough to tell half-truths or white lies, or to say the weather is good, bad, or indifferent ; but to tell the pure, unalloyed truth is a task arduous enough for the profoundest

intellect—and yet it needs no education. It demands only heart and spirit.” Depend upon it, that last dictum, which characteristically contradicts the first, is an error. If anything in the world needs an education, the telling of the truth does. Merely to relate simple events accurately is a thing much harder than lying. It is only vice that ever dispenses with education: virtue cannot. But undoubtedly there *is* needed the heart and spirit as well as the discipline. In fine, you cannot make the silken satchel of righteousness out of the sow’s ear of animal egoism and animal ignorance by any machinery yet framed.

Still, it is no chimerical thing to look for increasing scrupulosity of thought and speech from mankind at large. We have not prescribed a visionary altruism, such as that of the passage in the Sermon on the Mount which tells the buffeted man to turn the other cheek. That prescription, by transcending so far normal human nature, has done worse than fail: it has left men heedless of a more rational limitation on vindictiveness. And I have not suggested an intellectual non-resistance, out-Tolstoy-ing Tolstoy. If even Tolstoy is consciously free to resist criticism sharply by words, we may perhaps count ourselves within the bounds of intelligent morals inasmuch as we use, always after careful reflection, the weapon of speech against those who seek to slay with it. It is meet that those who begin with the sword rather than the trumpet should be met with



the sword, whether or not they are to fall by it ; that he who seeks to chastise with whips for mere difference of opinion should himself, once in a way, be chastised with scorpions.

And inasmuch as reason does not deny to men this much of outlet for fundamental instinct, there is the less need to fear that the most scrupulous and habitual reconsideration of our creeds and convictions will weaken our will for good. It is one of the many verbal fallacies of the age to say that faith in one's cause is the main condition of success ; and it is one of the many ethical errors which go with lax reasoning to hold that faith makes any cause respectable. Even if the triumphs won by enthusiastic and convinced men had been won over men irresolute and unconvinced, the ethical justification would be all to seek. The triumph of Islam is surely a rude ideal to hold up before civilised eyes. But the triumphs of unwavering conviction turn out to have been won over equal conviction. It is not recorded even by tradition that Goliath went out doubtfully against David : the moral drawn there is different. And it is even recorded that on the eve of the Battle of Hastings the Normans were diffident and reflective, and the doomed Saxons confident of victory. To doubt before acting is precisely the best way to escape the mishap of having to doubt in the middle of your act.

But let us not put the motive in the sense of final utility, though the sense of final utility is



always the final standard, provided only you hold it high enough. Let us put the motive for ourselves in our own sense of the rightness of the self-denial which arrests the first cravings of impulse, whether towards lawless asseveration, lawless denunciation, or lawless denial, and makes self-doubt an abiding principle, even as the ancient pietist sought to do with self-mortification. Our age, with all its faults, is surely as capable of a sane ideal as any that went before; and the ideal of making Reason commensurate with action, and of making each day a conscious new beginning in the higher life, is surely fittest for the age in which above all others every day brings forth a new thing. The higher life has lagged sadly behind the lower: we do and experience so much that the science of the whole is obscured by the ever enlarging sciences of the details. But when we see that there is no other salvation for man than that which he can compass by his own thought, we shall surely rise to the height of that great argument, and seek in a new way to make a new world by being perpetually new men.

## ON COMPROMISE.

A LECTURE.

(1895.)

IT is one of the odd chances in the fortunes of words that the verb "to compromise" has at once the meaning of making oneself safe and of putting oneself in danger. A charge or a dispute is "compromised" by concession, and a man is "compromised" by being connected with something questionable. Can it be, one sometimes wonders, that between these significations there is a certain subtle ethical relationship, as well as that mere train of associated ideas which bridges the endless divisions in the senses of sophisticated terms? The problem is an old one; and despite much capable discussion it is perhaps as well worth reconsidering to-day as ever.

A more eloquent and earnest handling of it there certainly cannot be than the well-known treatise devoted to it by a distinguished living statesman, whom some consider to have given up to politics what was meant for literature, if not to party what was meant for mankind. Mr. Morley's brilliant essay 'On Compromise' was written more than twenty years ago; and in the interval he has been able to put his principles to some very shrewd practical tests. In his case, as in some others, it is natural to wish the performance of youth could be, if not re-written, at

least commented, by maturity. For some men the mere publication of certain opinions early in life is something of a security for their remaining of those opinions, as having given hostages to criticism, so to speak ; but in these days it cannot be said that such austerity of continuance is either much invited by example or strongly enforced by public sentiment. Twenty years ago,\* Mr. Morley himself endorsed Mill's remark† that " this is an age of loud disputes and weak convictions " ; and, supposing that to be true, we do not seem to have developed very much as regards our convictions, whatever may be the case with our disputes. However that may be, it must have struck some of Mr. Morley's appreciative readers as somewhat remarkable that he was lately introduced to the attention of the religious world in the capacity of a performer, rather than a student, in compromise. The story, as given to the world by a Nonconformist clergyman, is that the right hon. gentleman, while staying as the guest of an orthodox nobleman, was told that in consideration of his opinions he could of course dispense with attendance at family prayers in the morning ; whereupon he answered to the effect that nothing better pleased him than to begin the day with a sense of being in communion of sympathy with those about him ; and that accordingly he would

\* ' On Compromise,' 1874.

† ' Autobiography,' p. 160. Mill's precise words were : " generally weak convictions " .



gladly attend prayers. Such a private arrangement would be no business of ours were it not that it has been admiringly made known to all the world by the clergyman in question, who sees in the episode a grace of character almost atoning for scepticism, and warmly commends it to the attention of mankind. It thus becomes, as it were, a broad hint to the rest of us who are of little faith, in our humbler spheres, to go and do likewise ; and it is not clear that the virtue of the example is supposed to be confined to participation in family prayers. The case seems distinctly relevant to the theme of the treatise I have referred to ; and it seems to suggest a reconsideration of that.

It may not, perhaps, be unduly presumptuous to suggest that the subject may profitably be handled on another method. Mr. Morley well remarked‡ in his essay that the modern use of what is called the Historic Method has a good deal to do with habits of compromise. He calls that one of the “profounder causes of weakened aspiration and impoverished moral energy, and of the substitution of latitudinarian acquiescence and faltering conviction for the whole-hearted assurance of better times”. Without committing ourselves just yet to the view that people in general are so much less whole-hearted to-day than of old, we may readily agree with him that “the abuse of

‡ Ed. 1888, p. 28, *et seq.*

this [the Historic] method, and an unauthorised extension and interpretation of its conclusions, are likely to have had something to do with the enervation of opinion " in some cases. " In the last century," he remarks,\* " men asked of a belief or a story, Is it true? We now ask, How did men come to take it for true? In short, the relations among social phenomena which now engage most attention are relations of original source, rather than those of actual consistency in theory and actual fitness in practice. The devotees of the current method are more concerned with the pedigree and genealogical connexions of a custom or an idea than with its own proper goodness or badness, its strength or its weakness."

It might perhaps here be noted that the new method is not after all so very new. As the best biographer of Burke might have remembered, *he* last century set the fashion of looking to pedigree and genealogy rather than to truth in principles. " It makes all the difference in the world," says Whately in the sentence Mr. Morley puts as the motto to his book, " whether we put Truth in the first place or the second place." Burke certainly sought to put it in the second place, if not in the third. But the fact remains that in our own day a good many people apply his process, with more coolness, but perhaps not

\* P. 31.

with less effect, to present-day problems. And whereas Mr. Morley of old met this abuse of the Historic Method — this tendency to compromise about a delusion because it has a good pedigree — with the method of direct moral appeal; and whereas the method of direct moral appeal does not seem to have been very successful in practice, there is perhaps room for another. I would suggest the Economic Method. A few years ago we heard a great deal about the correction of Political Economy by the Historic Method. Yet already, I believe, the tables are so far turned that, while Economics may still be partly expounded through history—as indeed it always was—we are now interpreting history by Economics. Not that that is a new expedient either; but it is now being consciously and deliberately applied to every stage of human evolution. The first large fact in life is nutrition: nutrition then is the first large fact in sociology. It will not do to say that the method of “economic determinism”, as it is called, is the whole of sociological interpretation. No one key will open all the locks of the human heart. The trouble about all methods is that they tend to make methodists. But if you are the master of your method, and not its servant, it may avail you for much.

Let us now ask, then, how Compromise, good and bad, arises among us; and how it affects life. It is at once obvious that in large part it is a necessity of social existence. “All combination,”



says Mill truly,\* "is compromise: it is the sacrifice of some portion of individual will for a common purpose." And combination is a very wide word. We may say that there cannot be so much as a dinner-party without compromise, to say nothing of political parties, churches, governments. Compromise, then, is so far a matter of simple common-sense; and insofar as the broad divisions of sects and parties go, it is reasonable to say that there is too little of it rather than too much. The phenomenon, for instance, of two great political parties pulling dead against each other is not creditable to the collective wisdom of a self-governing people; and we may hope that such wooden and inconsiderate opposition will gradually yield to the play of crossing forces, of new subdivisions of party. What we want, as regards public conduct, is compromise all over the field of activity; not merely the compromise involved in the combination of Welsh and Irish to secure Disestablishment and Home Rule, or of Liberal Unionist and Conservative to prevent them, but the spirit of compromise as among the directly opposing forces, who most need it. We must all in a sense live together: let us do so as peaceably as possible.

And here it is to be observed that people who are all for compromise to-day in other directions where it is not at all as desirable in the interests

\* 'Dissertations and Discussions,' i, 165.

of civilisation, are curiously laudatory of the uncompromising courses of other men in other times. Even Mr. Morley, who in general sees matters political with uncommon sanity, goes somewhat out of his way to praise some historic types whom in his own day he would have found "gey ill to live wi'", as Carlyle's mother is falsely said to have said of her son.

"To what quarter," he asks,\* "in the large historic firmament can we turn our eyes with such certainty of being stirred and elevated, of thinking better of human life and the worth of those who have been most deeply penetrated by its seriousness, as to the annals of the intrepid spirits whom the protestant doctrine of indefeasible personal responsibility brought to the front in Germany in the sixteenth century, and in England and Scotland in the seventeenth? It is not their fanaticism, still less is it their theology, which makes the great Puritan chiefs of England and the stern Covenanters of Scotland so heroic in our sight. It is the fact that they sought truth and ensued it, not thinking of the practicable nor cautiously counting majorities and minorities, but each man pondering and searching, so 'as ever in the great Task-master's eye'."

I respectfully demur to this estimate. For my own part I can feel more stirred and elevated by other contemplations. The personages in question refused compromise where compromise was right—that is, not in doctrine but in action; and the end of their action was to throw back progress of every description. It was because they miscarried that other men grew comparatively indifferent. I do not for a moment say they are to be held up to odium on that account: they belonged

\* 'On Compromise,' p. 113.

to their day and acted up to their lights, or some of their lights ; but at least we are not to single them out for a special praise which we deny to other men just as sincere in their mistakes. Our business is to study them and learn by them, not to praise them, save for the courage which they shared with their enemies. And the remarkable leniency with which they are often estimated must in some part be set down to a tendency which we have to deal with as a dubious development of compromise—the tendency to regard sincerity as a very fine thing in the days of Martin Luther and Oliver Cromwell or the early Christians, but as usefully superseded nowadays by other qualities. Social law is really not thus precarious. If it would be wrong for us to go to civil war to-day over Home Rule, we can hardly acclaim Hampden and Cromwell for resorting to it over ship-money, especially when we remember how Cromwell finally managed his own taxation. An essay on Compromise by Cromwell in the last year of his life, could he but have found leisure and the spirit of contemplation, would have been a priceless human document. As it is, the lesson of his career is just this, that if you will not compromise with other people over non-essentials you are likely to end by compromising on essentials with yourself.

But now let us turn to those forms of compromise which by implication we are all agreed in holding to be abstractly bad—all of us, that is,



who do not practise them—the forms of compromise which Mr. Morley attacked in his essay, twenty years ago. First of all, is it the case that these forms of compromise are peculiarly modern, or that this generation is peculiarly given to latitudinarianism and insincerity and moral impoverishment and all the rest of it? I have already hinted a doubt on the subject; and when I go back to Mr. Morley's teacher and predecessor, John Stuart Mill, and find *him* in his youth diagnosing his age in the same fashion, my doubt deepens. "There is a great increase of humanity," wrote young Mill,\* "a decline of bigotry, as well as of arrogance and the conceit of caste, among our conspicuous classes; but there is, to say the least, no increase of shining ability, and a very marked decrease of vigor and energy. With all the advantages of this age . . . there can scarcely be pointed out in the European annals any stirring times which have brought so little that is distinguished, either morally or intellectually, to the surface." That was written in 1836, nearly forty years before Mr. Morley's essay; so that those "better times" of "whole-hearted assurance" to which Mr. Morley points back must be somewhat remote and elusive. When we go back a hundred years, they seem to be still in the enchanted distance—with Cromwell and Luther and the early Christians. And, grant-

\* 'Dissertations and Discussions,' i, 171.

ing the sincerity of Luther and Cromwell, it can hardly be said, after all, that they represent the high-water mark of intellectual as distinguished from temperamental energy, or even that they are so absolutely unparalleled in modern times in respect of fidelity to conviction. The trouble is that the moderns who have been strenuously faithful to their convictions get overlooked as being rebels and blasphemers. Richard Carlile, who suffered nine years' imprisonment for freethinking propaganda—such men, and the men of the French Commune, are not counted for righteousness to this much-abused "age". Yet here too were energy and sincerity. May it not then be that human nature is after all not so vitally altered; and that what has happened is only a changed application of energy and a variation in the shapes of insincerity? May we not say that Mill answered himself when he wrote only a year later:

"Whatever man has been, man may be; whatever of heroic the heroic ages, whatever of chivalrous the romantic ages have produced, is still possible, nay, still *is*; and a hero of Plutarch may exist amidst all the pettinesses of modern civilisation, and with all the cultivation and refinement, and the analysing and questioning spirit of the modern European mind."\*

To clear up the matter, let us come to those forms of compromise which Mr. Morley assailed in his essay, and consider how they arise. He

\* *Id.*, p. 283.

specifies three provinces of compromise,† the first being in the formation of opinions, the second in the expression of them, the third in the effort to realise them. Of these the first may for practical purposes be set aside, the issue involved being not one of compromise in the ordinary sense. There can hardly be compromise in the *formation* of opinions. What Mr. Morley condemns in this connexion is rather mental indolence and prejudice than anything of the nature of compromise. We are practically narrowed down to the two points of expression of opinion, and action on opinion; and on the latter head we are agreed that general public action is clearly a proper field for compromise.

Where compromise is open and recognised; where there is no deception about it; where it is admittedly a means to a common good, it is really a good means up to the limits of our enlightenment. The real ground of debate, the sphere in which compromise tends to shade off from prudence to duplicity, from strategy to cowardice, is in the matter of the expression of opinion, taking that phrase to cover not only speech and acquiescence, but such action as is specially an implication of a particular opinion, as when, say, a man joins unbelievably in a religious act, not in order to save his life but merely to save his purse or his reputation. In matters of positive or political

† Essay cited, p. 94.



action, we may reasonably agree to yield something in order to save something else, always assuming that what we yield is not another person's right ; but in matters of simple opinion and the avowal of it, on subjects of the first importance, the rightness of compromise is a matter of doubt at almost every step.

A few points may be instantly waived. No instructed person disputes that as regards expression of opinion there are fit and seemly restraints as regards times and places and persons. No one has the right to thrust unwelcome reasonings on his fellows without the excuse of repelling a similar aggression ; and no one does well to go out of his way to disturb, with such reasonings, minds which can get nothing *but* disturbance from them. It is quite unnecessary, generally speaking, to press these considerations on rationalists, save in the case of young enthusiasts, whose errors in the matter are those of youth and enthusiasm, rather than of rationalism. The great bulk of really aggressive and meddlesome obtrusion of opinion has always come, and probably will always come, from religious people. In the third century, Christians felt called upon to protest when Pagans said " Jove bless you " after a sneeze. Modern unbelief is less meticulous. The truth is that just as there is little compromise where there ought to be most—in the adjustment of conflicting ideals of joint or public action ; so there is endless compromise where there ought

to be least—in the avowal by word and deed of opinions on questions which need not and should not affect joint public action, save in the special matter of the propaganda of those particular opinions. The ideal of civic life, the life of collective self-government, is peace and co-operation, to the end of social progress: the ideal of the intellectual life, as distinguished from the life of civic action, is continuous criticism, to the end of intellectual and social progress alike; and the combined and complete ideal is, the reconciliation of constant conflict in opinion with constant amenity in action and intercourse. Strife in opinion there must always be; that is the one form of strife to which mankind seems inevitably committed. The problem is to let it play through intellect and not through malignant passion.

But we no sooner “see the better way and approve”, in the words of Ovid, than we run the risk of “following the worse”. And the risk is the more grave, and the evil the more persistent, because it really rests on economic conditions. Mr. Morley, you will remember, deals well and forcibly with the many arguments which people offer to justify dissimulation and reticence in regard to popular beliefs which they are quite sure are false. The arguments in question mostly resolve themselves into three: (1) that beliefs may be false and yet not do harm in proportion to their falsity; (2) that to attack such false beliefs may do more harm than good; (3) that false beliefs

will die out if left alone, the true ones being "in the air". Now, it may seem an exaggeration to say, but I do say it with confidence, that each one of these three arguments is put forward not by reason of a real or freely reached conviction, but half-heartedly and by way of finding an excuse for a line of conduct not cordially and spontaneously chosen. Mr. Morley's counter arguments are mostly unanswerable, and need hardly be repeated. I do not believe that anyone sitting down to make a scientific investigation, uncoerced by private interest or personal position, will dispute Mr. Morley's contention that the acquiescence in all manner of bad reasoning tends to promote bad reasoning and all the ills that flow from it; that there is no security for the welfare of a truth save what is given by spreading it; and that those who begin by dissembling on one point stand a fair chance of becoming dissemblers on others. The instinct of veracity is not so hardy in man that it can safely be kept indoors, unexercised and unbreathed.

All this is so obvious that it need not be enlarged upon; for in point of fact these very arguments are the proof that the instinct of veracity has suffered in those who urge them. We have only to imagine the turning of the discussion to some scientific instead of a theological topic, in order to see how unreal they are. Who ever proposes to compromise on the subject of the law of gravitation? If the old theory of dew can be



shown to be wrong, if the nebular hypothesis be supposed to be open to a new criticism, if a new theory of electricity be brought forward, does anyone then suggest that error may be left to die of itself, that a false theory of electricity can do no harm? It may indeed be fairly argued that a theory of electricity has no bearing on morals, whereas a religious doctrine may have; but the general arguments about the inherent mortality of error must hold good in science if they hold good in philosophy. And while many people argue for reticence on the subject of the general belief in a future state, lest by upsetting beliefs we may upset moral principles connected with those beliefs, nobody nowadays seems to hesitate on the same ground about upsetting beliefs in ghosts and evil spirits and even in eternal torment, though every one of these beliefs has notoriously been connected with moral doctrine. Let us make an end of a fashion of dialectic that is really worn out; and let us do it the more readily inasmuch as the true explanation of it all is a thing to be stated more in sorrow than in anger. The truth is that men find all manner of arguments for not speaking out about false and absurd religious doctrines, because for so many men the act of speaking out is pecuniarily or otherwise dangerous.

The explanation, in fact, is economic. If there is more compromise to-day than formerly, more make-believe and timorous silence on the subject of the popular creed, it is because on the one hand

there are more people who do not believe the popular creed, while on the other hand these people are not yet numerous enough, or do not know themselves to be numerous enough, to venture on the open avowal of their opinions and face the pecuniary loss that may accrue. The "nation of shopkeepers" must in a measure have a shop-keeping ethic; and so long as the majority are believers, and as such are disposed to injure or boycott in trade those who criticise their creed, so long the shopkeeping nation is likely to be permeated by a habit of unworthy compromise on the matter on which there ought to be least compromise. And mere moral appeal, I repeat, seems likely to do little good, save indeed in so far as it makes new rationalists. When people feel a distinct economic pressure, whether they be shopkeepers or professional men, they will in general yield to that pressure; and they can effectively meet moral appeals by asking whether it is right for them to risk starvation for their wives and children. One of three things must happen: (1) either the economic conditions must be fundamentally changed, which is not a thing that can happen soon, whether or not we want it to happen; or else (2) the religious majority must be civilised to the point of abandoning the desire to injure the anti-religious minority; or else (3) the religious majority must be reduced to a minority by propaganda—a process which of course is difficult precisely in proportion to the amount of the

forces making for compromise. In any case, the principle of economic determinism is the main key to the situation.

If it be replied to all this that it is not mere economic need or self-interest that causes most of the acts of compromise on religious questions, but that love of moral peace is the main cause of the conformity of so many educated people to creeds in which they do not believe, I point to the strifes of politics, which show small concern for moral peace. And if it be urged that the amount of open conflict on political questions, again, proves that economic pressure is not so forcible as I have said, I answer that that is really the crowning proof of the proposition. Even on political issues, indeed, there is a great deal of compromise on economic grounds by people who fear to lose commercially by openness, to say nothing of the amount of make-believe by people who have no convictions, and can assume any that are convenient. But the mass of the electorate, probably, avows its convictions, and does not unduly compromise as regards the expression of opinion. And why? Because, to start with, the numbers are so great on each side that in general the risks of avowal are likely to be balanced by the gains of avowal; and because, for the rest, political parties are kept alive by the chronic pressure of problems affecting the economic welfare of the people. Men are naturally more ready to fight for their pecuniary interest than for a mere criti-



cism of a doctrine which only intellectually bears on life. Therefore it is easy to make a party for or against a political proposal. Therefore there is less economic pressure towards dissimulation, towards compromise, than in the case of a mainly intellectual movement. Only when sects are already large, and when their opinions—as is the way with religious sects—are held as passions and prejudices, can they be looked-to to energise for a doctrine as apart from an interest.

There is indeed one apparent exception to this rule, and that is the case of a movement of religious excitement, such as was the Wesleyan movement in the lifetime of its founder, and such as may have been the Christian movement at times in the early centuries. Here we have a sect taking shape, and its adherents facing ridicule and refusing all compromise. But even here the economic principle holds good. These new sects are formed among the classes that have least to lose by heterodoxy. As in ancient times the slave and the proletary were the first adherents of Christianity, their opinions being disregarded and contemned by their masters, so last century the then lowest grades of workers were free to follow the cult that attracted them, because their masters either cared little what they believed, or thought the religious form of excitement less harmful than other possible forms. Broadly speaking, the workers in the mass are least given to dissimulation and compromise in these matters, because

their incomes are least affected by avowal of heretical opinions of any sort. And as regards the early Christians it seems clear that, while they were in large numbers moved by an appeal which was really on the level of their previous culture and religious emotion, and when so moved were often ready to face martyrdom as Asiatics and other half developed races are known to have been in past ages and are now ; at the same time very large numbers were attracted to the Church by the systematic alms-giving it was enabled to practise through the gifts of those superstitious rich adherents who gradually multiplied as time went on. Thus the economic key yields the gist of the explanation in the cases where compromise appears to be little in favor, as in the cases where it is much in favor ; and the double test confirms the theory.

And now we have the decisive light on that other problem as to the alleged predominance of spontaneous energy and uncompromising directness in previous ages as compared with our own. Looking at the movements of Cromwell and of Luther in the light of our own political movements, we can see that there was really no peculiar stress of conscientiousness in those ancient outbreaks. They were, indeed, more violent, either resorting to or contemplating physical force at an early stage, whereas in our day we more and more tend to regard physical force as the worst of all means of settling or carrying on disputes.

But the total amount of energy has not proportionally fallen off, though in our day much more energy is consumed in the struggle for existence, leaving less for political explosion; and as regards the moral courage involved, the case must now be entirely restated. Neither in the resistance of the English Parliament to Charles nor in that of Luther to the Pope was there any lonely courage to speak of, — that courage of isolated men and groups which is in the warfare of opinion what Napoleon held “two-o’clock-in-the-morning-courage” to be in the wars of the flesh. Luther had by him and behind him plenty of sympathisers and supporters from the first. The economic principle had already wrought for him: many Germans were tired of paying Papal tribute, and beginning to be disgusted with the newer expedients to fill the papal coffers. Had the Pope professed to *give* indulgences as rewards either for penance or for merit or for church-going, the essential absurdity of the proposition would never have aroused a movement of reformation as did the act of *selling* the indulgences for money, though the absurdity and the immorality would have been just the same. As it was, Luther had half his world with him either at the outset or very soon after.

And so with the English Rebellion. The anti-Romanist feeling which underlay the opposition to the king’s demands was already fully developed. What of special innovating courage had ever been



involved on the Protestant side had been displayed by the brutal despot who overthrew the Romish Church in England ; and by the horde of mere plunderers who aided him in the work. Thus the Reformation itself had an economic basis : greed of nobles and other laymen for church lands. On that basis English Protestantism arose. And in so far as other feelings than established Protestant zeal were involved in the armed resistance to Charles, the leaders of the rebellion had an abundance of support and countenance from the first. Whole districts co-operated : Cromwell never stood alone for any cause, whether freedom from fresh taxation or freedom from religious oppression. Two large political parties stood arrayed against each other, and where there ought to have been compromise there was none ; just as to-day, when happily we have learned to do without civil war, there is still far too little compromise in practical politics, where compromise is most needed. And the human nature which then seemed to refuse compromise or dissimulation over questions of creed was the same psychic nature, barring modifications, as the human nature which to-day plays fast and loose with religious sincerity on economic pressure. Taxation and religion were in Cromwell's day the main matter of politics ; economic pressure operated mainly through royal taxation, which was the more strenuously resisted because commerce and industry were still primitive. In the evolved industrial

state, economic pressure is manifold and in part avoidable by conformity; that is the difference. It is not that men are grown spontaneously insincere, though there was a distinct development of insincerity and indifferentism in the age after the great collapse of Puritanism, which had been led by zeal from headlong civil war to anarchy, to despotism, to destruction, till its every political principle was belied and its every ideal stultified. Then the economic pressure set in the direction of the new movement of power and politics; and the average man resorted to compromise very much as had been the case under Henry the Eighth, when the conjunction of tyrannous power and lay greed seem to have produced as much of cowardly submission and prudent obedience among Englishmen as has ever been seen in England since. What Protestant now acclaims Sir Thomas More? A late Protestant historian loudly applauds his execution. But Sir Thomas More exhibited a lonely courage of the rarest kind, beside which even the courage of Luther is not conspicuous. Clearly we had need revise our estimates of the past, of its sincerities and audacities, in the light of an impartial historical and social science.

We have reached at this stage, I hope, one scientific though simple result, in the view that those forms of insincerity and sham conformity which were so eloquently and justly condemned by Mr. Morley are to be explained as products of certain

economic conditions, in relation with modern intellectual movements, not as signs of any arbitrary or mysterious moral degeneration. And as those economic conditions do not seem readily alterable in any direct way, it does not appear that we may look for a speedy reform on the moral side. That conclusion may not unreasonably be regarded by those who agree with it as giving a new motive towards the alteration of the economic conditions. But it is not our business here to advocate or discuss such changes in detail ; and it remains for us to ask ourselves how, ethically speaking, we should adjust ourselves to the situation sketched—those of us who are concerned about its aspect. Is it really so little hopeful? If the economic conditions are hard to alter directly, may they not be altered to some extent indirectly?

Without venturing on any prediction, I incline to say that in one way they might be. I have said that the minority compromise in matters of religious opinion, either because they are so small a minority or because they think they are a small minority. Now, they are probably not really so small a minority to-day as many of them are apt to suppose. Unluckily, the very fear of speaking-out prevents them from ascertaining their strength: they are weak because they are unorganised. Did they but give each other mutual support, they would probably find, at least in the towns, that they could defy the economic pressure set up by bigotry ; and the bigots in turn



might learn sooner the propriety of compromise in the matter of business intercourse where compromise in the sense of mutual toleration should be the rule. In rural districts where there is much religious fervor, there is of course little hope of a pleasurable life for an avowed unbeliever ; and in this respect it is found that the collective bigotry of dissenting populations can compare with that of the worst of the State clergy. But in the towns it seems certain that there is a steady decline of real orthodoxy, which indeed, like the unreal, mainly rests on the economic fact that it is the means of livelihood of a whole army of specially trained men. Mr. Morley took the unbelieving priest as an extreme type of the compromising citizen ; and it seems certain that unbelieving priests are more numerous every year ; that is to say, there are every year, apparently, more priests who find themselves without real belief in the doctrines they are hired to propound, and who salve their consciences by the argument that good may be done even by means of a false faith. These men too are under economic pressure : it is so hard to win a livelihood otherwise. The more need for combination and organisation among those who feel that a false faith, preached when known to be false, must needs work far more demoralisation than good to mankind.

Such organisation should involve no element of sectarianism, no lessening of public co-operation of all kinds in matters non-religious. The atti-

tude of those Christians who will not even do the work of a Peace Society without introducing the dogmas and pretensions of their creed into the society's propaganda is clearly not to be imitated. Men may work for right reason as against religion, without setting themselves apart in matters political. Nay, there may even be organisation of rationalists for the purpose of mutual countenance and the promotion of sincerity without adding to these the work of propaganda, which is often difficult to agree upon. It might separately promote, for instance, openness and straightforwardness in such matters as the christening of children, their school training in dogma, the celebration of marriage, and the ceremony of burial. In all of these things there is grievous and needless compromise. The religious schooling of rationalists' children in particular is a most serious trouble. Thousands of parents who individually dislike the training thus given, yet allow their children to be subjected to it because they know that to be isolated and marked off from and nicknamed by its fellows is a painful trial to a child. To save it from this trial, the child is subjected to the probable future pain of having to reject beliefs forced upon it in childhood, to say nothing of the moral and intellectual darkening of the growing intelligence by the daily inculcation of doctrines false in fact, wrong in ethics, and absurd in the light of reason. Yet if all the rational parents could but combine to withdraw their chil-

dren simultaneously, as the law allows, from religious instruction in the public schools, their children would not be isolated ; while the others, no longer able to persecute the little heretic, might thus far be civilised to an extent to which religion and parental training have as yet failed to carry them.

Such an organisation of parents has lately been proposed, and no more important purpose could be set out. Once begun, the movement might successfully proceed to discountenance those endless weak conformities to superstition in the ceremonies of marriage and burial which give priest-hoods their most enduring source of strength. It is fair to ask of all public men who profess to stand for rational morality that they should set their faces against these things. An eminent living historian, Mr. Bryce, has well written that "our sloth or timidity, not seeing that whatever is false must also be bad, maintains in being what once was good long after it has become helpless and hopeless" ;\* and there must be thousands of readers who have approved of that saying. But what do they, or the leaders of enlightened opinion, *do* to act on the principle that whatever is false must also be bad? We have seen Mr. Huxley buried with religious rites, and an epitaph put on his grave expressing a theistic belief which he had repudiated. We see Mr.

\* 'Holy Roman Empire,' 8th ed., p. 357.



Morley extolled for attending the family prayers of the nobility — an institution in itself surely the most flimsy of all English forms of ceremonialism, with its daily half-hour of vain parade of equality before Omnipotence, in the face of the most rigid dominion and subjection and moral separation of castes all the rest of the day. And we cannot here say that it is economic pressure that is the proximate cause of the improper compromise made. The teachers, it would seem, have need to be taught, the custodians of moral principle to be supervised. Many of their lapses, it may be, are to be set down as concessions to the weak. But while concession to the weak is always a better thing than concession to Philistinism and wealth, it is none the less dangerous. We hear much of the harm of specially helping the weak to survive; but there is much more need to guard against the evil of letting their opinions rule. We want a new intellectual ethic at least as much as a new social ethic.

It is a comfort, in view of these things, to remember that the workers, with all their hardships, yet retain that single moral advantage which we before contemplated—the advantage of being free from most of the temptations to unworthy conformity which beset other ranks; and that they may thus do in the future for reasonable beliefs what they have done in the past for unreasonable. They have already, indeed, done much, far more than the other classes, proportion-

ately to their culture. But their rendering of the needed service to civilisation is visibly dependent on their own success in winning economic well-being, on which in turn so largely depends their capacity for intellectual interests. Here again the sociological lesson is clear and emphatic. And when it is thus seen how all social movement, be it progress or retrogression, is under the reign of law, and how a knowledge of the law may make possible the gradual reform of the conditions, surely the bands of progress, where bands there be, may take heart and hope. Surely the reasoned precepts of science may be to them what, as Milton sings, the Dorian music was of old to warriors who,

“instead of rage,  
Deliberate valor breathed, firm and unmoved  
With dread of death, to flight or foul retreat.”

Surely these too may contain a power

“to mitigate and swage  
With solemn touches, troubled thoughts, and chase  
Anguish, and doubt, and fear, and sorrow and pain.”

Whether or not the race is thus to learn to bring science and organisation to bear on its highest concerns, there ever remains for the true man the lot of the vanguard, with its old perils, its old pains, and its old inalienable reward of self respect. In some sense, indeed, it is almost vain to count that new truth can ever have a smooth course. When one verity has reached the length of organised support, another must begin

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its way alone, if the great succession is to be maintained. For of most vital truths it is spiritually true, as was fabled of old of the mythic children predestined to found the realm of Rome, that they are nursed into strength by a wolf, the wolf of prejudice, of enmity, of persecution. And so for the new truth, to-day as of old, the precept to the bringer-forth must be that of the poet-preacher :

“Cast the bantling on the rocks,  
Suckle him with the she-wolf's teat ;  
Wintered with the hawk and fox,  
Power and speed be hands and feet.”

For the sane reformer of to-day that is true which was said to the fanatic of old : “Paradise lies under the shadow of swords.” But that, of course, is not a saying for all men ; and for the simple and sincere citizen, we repeat, there always remains the course of unpretending rectitude in the light of well-established knowledge, and under the protection and encouragement of the rational co-operation of his fellow-thinkers.



# THE PLEASURES OF MALIGNITY.

A LECTURE.

(1890.)

It is Professor Bain, I think, who has introduced into psychology\* the phrase "the Pleasures of Malevolence", which I doubt not has seemed to many of you a strange theme. The phrase is a perfectly serious one, and it points to a very important fact in human nature, though human nature would fain repudiate the implication. The eloquent Dr. Chalmers, as Professor Bain reminds us, sought to demonstrate† that malevolence has no pleasures; that he who hates, even if he exult in the injury to his enemy, must be conscious that all is not well within him; and that the tyrant who has the power to wreak to the uttermost his every caprice of passion does but vainly pursue a joy he cannot attain, and in reality lives a life of agony. The purpose of this thesis is the old one of showing that evil is somehow alien to the scheme of things; that we are "meant", somehow, to be good and kind; and that if we do ill by each other it must be our own fault, since our natures were "designed" for benevolence only. The field of theology is heaped with the wrecks of such arguments, which

\* See his 'The Emotions and the Will,' 3rd ed., p. 187.

† In his dissertation on 'The Inherent Misery of the Vicious Affections'.

vainly seek to reconcile contradictories, and gain their point by the device of the schoolboy who in an elaborate equation makes out, by the substitution of a *plus* for a *minus*,  $1=0$ . If there be design in Nature, we do what we were designed to do: if we can frustrate the design of Omnipotence, the datum of design is meaningless. We must just then turn and take the old path to truth—observation and reasoning.

Now, when we consider the matter strictly, there is seen to be a certain measure of practical truth in the declamation of Chalmers. It is true that the feeling of positive hatred can never long be a pleasurable one; that "all is not well within us" when we plan or long for vengeance; and that a condition of resentment is one of unrest and wearing strain. If, as Coleridge says, "to be wroth with one we love doth work like madness in the brain," no less true is it that all active hate soon verges towards physiological distress. But that is not at all a proof that malignant feeling is incompatible with pleasure. The strain is simply that inseparable from all intense feeling; and if it is ever great in the case of malevolent feeling it is because that feeling has itself been very strong. Have we not Shelley's sigh over the burden of "love's sad satiety," and Keats's picture of

"Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips  
Bidding adieu; and aching Pleasure nigh,  
Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips;"

and his avowal,

“Ay, in the very temple of Delight  
Veil'd melancholy has her sovran shrine”?

Nay, is it not found that the extremer forms of passion actually meet in unhinged organisms, so that Milton's figure of “lust hard by hate” becomes a physiological truth? These facts are plainly to be explained not by moral but by physiological laws, and the general truth they prove is, not that pain has been annexed to all malevolent feeling, but that it is correlative with all excessive emotion whatever, as is implied in the simple admission that any emotion may go to excess. So that up to a certain point malevolent emotion may be as pleasurable as any other. So clear is this that I even hesitate to say that that person is fortunate, if such a one exists, who has never known a malignant joy of any kind—that is, any joy connected with any one else's pain or discomfiture—for to be wholly devoid of the capacity for such joy would seem to imply, in the present stage of human evolution, some want of sensibility. True, the test of predominant goodness in character is just the degree of rapidity and certainty with which one passes from a malignant satisfaction to pity or a comprehensive sadness over all manifestations of evil; but that is another matter. It is still part of the paradox of our being that the destructive feeling is at times momentarily inevitable to the process of moral judgment.



Some will doubtless object to the term malevolence or malignity as applied to what is called a just indignation, as if anybody could possibly be indignant without feeling that he was justly so. The terms "noble rage" and "righteous wrath" testify to the conviction that at times we do well to be angry. But it is mere confusion to apply the terms malignant and malevolent only to angry feelings which we believe to be wrong or unwarranted, and to separate the notion from all anger which we believe to be justified. Let us clear our minds of cant. When we call our neighbour malignant, he, or she—it is frequently she—is satisfied of the justice of the feeling we condemn, else the anger would not be there; and when we ourselves are indignant with the best cause in the world we may easily be "malevolent" in the eyes of another neighbour. And even when we and our neighbours combine to detest somebody with no friends, be it the Whitechapel murderer or the man who blasphemes our Gods, an enemy of society or a reformer of it—and it is sometimes hard to say which is the more hated—in either case we are exemplifying that elemental destructive force which, paired in unconscious Nature with its opposite, as repulsion with attraction, is seen in conscious Nature in the wars of beasts and of races, modifying and refining up through invective and competition to the subtleties of epigrams and barbed compliments, and the moral exultation good people feel over the downfall of evil doers.

It is one of the drawbacks of an undiversified study of ethics—for every single study has its drawbacks—that it tends to carry us out of sight of our cosmical significance and relations; and it is well at times to go back to the premiss that we are all evolved out of the cosmic gas, and to contemplate ourselves dispassionately as mere “fruits of the unknown dædalian plan” equally with the birds and the landscape. There is no fear of our being morally the worse: we can never be the worse for knowing ourselves better.

Now, there can be no question that a good deal of our pleasure in life comes of this pervasive unkind feeling towards others. Some of us may have it only in the primordial and comparatively innocent form of the consciousness that we are better than many of our neighbours. But it can take more active forms than that without making us notoriously unpopular. To some avocations it is a *sine qua non*. Not to speak of politics, or social purity propaganda, or popular preaching, it is clearly one of the conditions of literary criticism; for if we did not dislike inferior books and resent the waste of our time over them we should have no enthusiasm for the books that repay our reading. And it may be contended that there are few purer forms of malignant pleasure than that which comes of being critically severe on a bad writer without experiencing or showing that bad temper which we all admit to be a form of discomfort. An English critic, writing of a passage

in which Sainte-Beuve makes pitiless fun over an imitator of Chateaubriand, remarks, "I think Sainte-Beuve must have enjoyed himself very much in writing this, for it is extremely clever, and profoundly ill-natured." And all of Sainte-Beuve's tribe, down to the smallest, will admit the probability; though they may demur to the phrase "*profoundly* ill-natured", as applied to a case of malevolence where the pleasure lies much more in the wit itself than in the sting it may inflict on another. All humor, we may safely say, is safeguarding in its general effects, and at least precludes more injurious emotion on the part of the humorist, even if the person laughed at does not join, as he sometimes can, in the laugh against himself. We know, indeed, that humor itself takes its rise, or that one of the elements of humor does, in the pleasurable excitement of the lower grades of humanity over the spectacle of suffering. Savages, we know, exhibit enjoyment in witnessing the struggles of a drowning man who has done them no harm; and even among such a comparatively civilised populace as the Chinese, it is said, people will laugh at the sight of a slipping ladder with men upon it. Among ourselves, the frequently confessed sense of amusement at the spectacle of a man falling on ice is a modified survival of the same organic tendency, which should qualify our impulse to express horror at the brutalities of ancient Pagans. But while the sense of the incongruous, so valuable



as a palliative to stress of serious feeling, is thus developed, like everything else, out of very ugly beginnings, it is finally on the side rather of social than of anti-social sentiment.

Lest, however, we obscure the question by only thinking of non-serious malignity, let us turn to the case of that pleasurable exaltation which is so often seen to accompany angry feeling on the part of serious persons towards those whose wickedness they denounce or expose. And let us make the point clearer by taking a particular case. In a recently published biographical sketch of a lady now living, it was told how she brought to public disgrace a young officer who had sought to seduce a young servant girl. The lady, learning of the facts, instructed the girl to make an assignation with the young man in a public place, and to this place at the appointed time she brought or sent a number of young artisans who, having been informed of the nature of the case, assaulted, maltreated, and publicly derided the offender, who finally had to slink away in an ignominious fashion. And we are told that if the lady who arranged the episode had been able, she would have had the officer cashiered. The whole story, I understand, has given much moral satisfaction to the majority of those who are active on behalf of social purity. They feel that the vicious and heartless purpose of the offender was rightly punished, and that it would have been well if he could have been cashiered, and reduced to the lowest ignominy.

Here there can be no question either of the warmly malevolent feeling or of the pleasure accompanying it, or of the association of that pleasure with strong and serious moral convictions. The persons applauding will of course call their feeling righteous; they may even call it divine. Lord Wolseley has written that there must surely be some spark of divine fire in the exultation of the warrior when he comes to grips with his foe. It certainly seems a pity that a word should be reduced to having no function whatever; and I at least should make no demur to Lord Wolseley's proposition if there were added to it this corollary: That there is also a spark of divine fire in the feeling with which some of us, on reading that and similar utterances of Lord Wolseley, privately apply to him opprobrious terms, of which, for public purposes, we modify the forms, but hardly the spirit. Seeing, however, that this impartial employment of the term "divine" might lead to confusion, it seems better to argue without it. I would call Lord Wolseley's divine fire simply a particular manifestation of malevolent feeling, as I would call the episode of the lady and the disgraced officer such a manifestation. And now we come to our moral problem: How are these manifestations of feeling to be viewed from the standpoint of ethical science?

We are agreed, I hope, that, as feeling is evolved out of the unconscious, so moral feeling is evolved out of the simply conscious; and that

thus our benevolent and our malevolent feelings alike are fitly to be subjected to the checks of reason, the test of results, just as the processes of nature and the tendencies of the lower animals are held to be fitly subjected to our control. Instinct, first-thought, is valid, ethically speaking, only when it has been endorsed by correlative instincts, by second and third thoughts; and it is in the nature of moral evolution that the further or qualifying instincts tend to be developed successively and continuously. The perpetual difficulty of practical ethics is this—that while morality clearly rests equally on primary self-regarding instinct and on secondary sympathetic instinct, both instincts alike are capable of leading to evil. The very sense of right rises in physical instinct, as we can see in the habits of animals; and this is the scientific justification of the term “natural right”, which covers all social arrangements that can be permanently harmonised with the first biological instinct and its social correlative, and marks off as invalid and deserving of abolition all other so-called rights set up by the legislation of either the majority or the minority. Now, it is in the nature of a relatively high or developed moral enthusiasm, just as of a relatively low or primary egoism, to outleap the check of the secondary instinct of sympathy, or of the further sympathy which checks the first. Indignation, in the nature of the case, excludes sympathy with its object; which is another way of saying that indignation



is at all times morally dangerous. In the case we are specially considering, of the conscientious lady, burning to humiliate the vicious officer, the indignation springs first from sympathy with the endangered girl; but there is clearly no scintilla of sympathy with the wrongdoer. And yet the wrongdoer should be taken into account. Either he is to remain a member of society or he is not. In the latter case we must either shut him up for ever or put him to death; and the propriety of either of these courses, if it is anyone's instinct to take either, is determined by its social results. But probably not even the indignant lady in the height of her wrath thought of putting the sinner to death, or in even temporary custody. Now, if neither of these courses is to be taken, if he is to remain a member of society, our action towards him is clearly non-moral if we put him outside all sympathy. To leave a man free and yet treat him as a noxious lower animal is to cancel morality in his case, to tell him that you in no way recognise any human claims of his to goodwill, which amounts to saying that he need now recognise no claims of yours—that is to say, as between you and him there is no morality. And if this situation can rightly arise over a grave offence, short of penal treatment, it may rightly arise over a small one which we chance to resent warmly.

Instead of putting the matter thus abstractly, let us, for clearness sake, put it concretely. What are the practical effects of publicly and grossly

humiliating a wrongdoer? Is he made better or worse? No open-minded inquirer will deny that there is a great probability of his being made worse, of his being driven, for one thing, into a state of permanent and abiding hatred towards all who have humiliated him, and of a further determination to be merely more furtive and not more scrupulous in his actions. If you disgrace him to the extent of driving him out of all decent society, you virtually tell him to join the "lapsed mass", so called, and conform wholly to its standards. In the particular case under notice, all this might have happened, and worse. Supposing the vicious young officer had been, as some vicious young officers are, physically powerful and courageous, and had furiously resisted his assailants, there might have been bloodshed and murder, the real guilt of which would lie at the door of that moral strategist, the indignant lady. I will not suggest that there might very easily have arisen a painful mistake in identification, for that argument would apply equally to all cases of punitive action, physical or other, in which a culprit was to be publicly exposed. I will assume that the possibility of mistake was excluded; and will suppose finally the case of the officer being cashiered. To get out of the army is, in most cases, a good thing; to be drummed out of it is to be invited in the name of society to turn card-sharper or loafer, or to get away into a totally

new society, for which, in the terms of the case, you are no less unfit than you are for that from which you are expelled.

Now, that is exactly the penal method of the Middle Ages in minor cases. In our own day we at times meet survivals of it in the resort of provincial magistrates to the device of telling a suspicious person to leave the town and go to some other town. They are simply throwing their refuse into their neighbours' garden, a proceeding which, on the part of an individual citizen, leads to his being fined and menaced; but which, on the part of a magistrate getting rid of a bad citizen, has its unscrupulousness veiled for the eye of his fellow-citizens by their limitation of their ethics to their own municipal boundary. But let us not single out the primitive provincial magistrate for our censure. Broadly speaking, we all live morally from hand to mouth. Just as the cleanest of us continue to allow our sewage to pollute the river and the sea-beach, so do the most scrupulously moral among us as a rule merely elbow immorality away from us and on to some one else's ground. The lying or thieving apprentice or servant who plagues and plunders us we get rid of; "some one else can try her"; and when we rise to the height of refusing her a "character" we feel we have touched the very summits of virtue, since we do nothing to deceive our neighbour, that is, our servant-employing neighbour. We have only left our other



neighbour, the offender, to take to prostitution, if she likes, for a living.

At times, indeed, such a policy of expulsion may be in a manner forced upon an individual placed in a position of responsible administration. Thus Dr. Arnold, of Rugby, was noted for the promptitude in which he expelled from his school those whom he counted unpromising boys; and he made his policy a matter of principle. "Till a man learn," he declared, "that the first, second, and third duty of a schoolmaster is to get rid of unpromising subjects, a great public school will never be what it might be, and what it ought to be."\* In this course he had, it seems, a theory of final utility, sometimes retaining boys guilty of grave offences, and expelling others whose offences were comparatively venial, being "decided by the ultimate result on the whole character of the individual, or on the general state of the school." Rugby being a public boarding-school, it might be contended that boys thus expelled were not necessarily made Ishmaelites, but, whether good or bad, might get their schooling otherwise. Arnold described one boy as "just one of those characters which cannot bear a public school, and may be saved and turned to great good by the humanities of private tuition". But it is obvious that in a public system of education, power of expulsion of this kind from public

\* Stanley's 'Life of Arnold', ch. iii.

schools entails a public responsibility of providing other schools where troublesome subjects may be dealt with ; whereas Arnold evidently thought much more of the task of keeping his own school right from his own point of view, than of the chances left open to the boys he expelled ; and many people are seen to acquiesce in the expulsion of poor but naughty boys from the public day schools, without asking whether it is right that these black sheep should be thrust masterless into the outer darkness, and left to develop their bad tendencies as they list. To do this is simply to facilitate and manufacture crime, the limitation of which is one of the foremost purposes of national education. And if in all these cases there is grave cause for circumspection, surely there is equal cause in cases in which good people propose to resort to a policy of moral boycotting of certain classes of offenders. As a means of enforcing a particular act of social submission, boycotting may be ethically defensible in certain circumstances ; but as a means of permanently extracting individuals for whom we make no social provision, it is scientifically inconsequent and socially barbarous. It is trying to treat the sinner as the Middle Ages treated the leper ; a sinking of the relations of human beings at the point in question to those of gregarious animals whose first instincts constitute their whole morality.

What has all this to do, it may be asked, with the Pleasures of Malignity? This much, that hos-

tile feeling, as we set out by saying, may as easily work evil when formally sanctioned by our morality as when not so sanctioned. Somehow sanctioned it always is: we cannot possibly be angry or resentful without feeling we have some cause; but we do not always pat ourselves on the back and say our wrath is righteous and morally ordained. Carlyle announced to himself and others that his rage was Godlike when it was turned against a set of wretched criminals; but, though he always inclined more or less to consider his wrath divinely inspired, he was not wont to announce with equal confidence the sacredness of his fury at a maid-of-all-work who banged the plates on the table. I am trying to show you that all forms of wrath are equally in need of supervision, and that formulas like Carlyle's are at bottom either cant or self-delusion.

But now arises the further question: Are the pleasures of malignity *ever* pardonable or tolerable from the point of view of ethical science? To some of you I may seem to be proving too much, to be laying down principles which cannot be applied to human life. Well, I will not ride off on the subterfuge that ideals are at least always useful as standards to try other people's conduct by: I will face the difficulty of application to practice. Our guiding principle, we have seen, is that of final utility, or rather the general ethical test which is compounded out of the instincts of self-preservation, of sympathy, and of final social

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utility. Now, I maintain that by that general test the episode of the public humiliation of the vicious young officer is condemned as in itself a non-moral proceeding. It was the worst of all practicable ways of dealing with the case ; just as, if the warm-tempered lady herself had been guilty, in the heat of moral indignation, of speaking unjustly and calumniously—as well-meaning people sometimes will speak—of some person whose principles she disliked, the worst possible way of dealing with her error would have been to confront her at a public meeting convened for moral purposes and accuse her of falsehood and slander. And this consideration brings me, who am a journalist and lecturer, to the question, Is *any* kind or degree of public exposure, in the form of printed invective or sarcasm, ever ethically justifiable?

Here we soon come to a practicable stand. I may be compounding, in the proverbial fashion, for the sins I am inclined to, but I should say that moral or literary exposure of certain kinds of wrong-doing, assuming it to be made in a social spirit, is part of the inevitable strife of progress, since there are kinds of wrong-doing which cannot well be resisted or modified in any other way. Suppose, for instance, a bishop makes an unscrupulous and calumnious attack on the principles of so-called Materialists and Rationalists, as bishops do every now and then, it is hardly conceivable that any Materialist can do any

good by private remonstrance. You may privately moralise a vicious young officer by expostulation ; but hardly an elderly bishop. And even if you could, your private success would not undo the public evil done, unless the bishop were induced to retract publicly his injurious utterance ; which act, on the part of a bishop, I take to be inconceivable. In the interests of the right culture of the public, therefore, from the Rationalist's point of view, the bishop ought to be attacked and refuted ; and if sarcasm be useful as a means of bringing the bishop's folly and injustice home to those whom he may have swayed for evil, the use of such sarcasm—unless it can be shown to work social evil by driving the bishop to desperation, which is hardly likely—is in the present stage of civilisation ethically justifiable. In which case the operating Rationalist is likely to enjoy one of the Pleasures of Malignity, for it is hardly in human nature not to enjoy satirising a pretentious and bullying bishop. Here we are publicly exposing, in a limited and therefore on the whole a defensible manner, a public man, who by public speech assumed public responsibility, and who would probably admit in the abstract that public criticism is a proper check on public men, whatever he might think of any particular criticism of himself. Here there is no driving of a private person into the glare of public disgrace, and thence into the gloom of private degeneration, which leads to lower and lower vice and crime. We are applying moral

punishment in the one rational way, that is to say, to the substantially good rather than to the substantially bad—a paradox which I recommend to your serious attention. We enforce on the offender the lesson either of self-regarding prudence or of wholesome criticism. We either deter or enlighten him for the future. All practical ethical tests are satisfied, except perhaps that involved in the question whether the exposure of the bishop may not have an injurious effect on the character of the person who exposes him. And this is a difficult question, opening up new difficulties. We have to settle whether, or how far, the Pleasures of Malignity are subjectively demoralising.

Clearly there is a risk, to begin with, of growing to take a vicious or undue pleasure in the exposure of human frailties. Once, as an anonymous journalist, I penned a paragraph of sarcastic criticism of a philanthropic religious lady who, professing to speak in the name of a religion of love, chanced to display a rather startling access of what seemed gratuitously malevolent feeling. On this another religious and philanthropic lady wrote me an indignant letter, accusing me of taking pleasure in publishing good people's errors. In that case I suppose there was an indulgence in the Pleasures of Malignity all round ; and it would be fatuous on my part to contend that two good women were wholly wrong and I wholly right. The ethical tests would be : Was the first lady advantageously and necessarily admonished ;



were many ladies as much put out as the second lady ; and was my character vitiated. I will not here attempt to answer any of these questions : I only indicate them. But I will say in general terms that any position is unfortunate in which man or woman is led to indulge more in malevolent feeling, no matter against whom, than in pity and tolerance and philosophic recognition of the immanence of evil in things. Whether our bias be naturally to such an excess of indulgence in the Pleasures of Malignity, or whether such a bias be developed by our surroundings and avocation, the evil is the same. We tend to be multipliers rather than repressors of evil ; and multiplication of evil of any kind whatever is ethically indefensible. This caveat clearly applies to all who are concerned in public controversy, to politicians, to partisan journalists, to advocates of social purity, to religionists, to freethinkers. And, by way of bringing home the moral, I would say that it is one of the risks of Freethinkers in particular that whereas they find themselves often assailed, if they be at all outspoken, with what they feel to be base or mean injustice and odious virulence by religious bigots and others, they are tempted to a constant preparation for asperity, a more and more frequent satisfaction in wounding attack and rejoinder and pitiless ridicule—a too great indulgence, in fact, in the Pleasures of Malignity, making them less humane and therefore less social than they might conceivably have

been. They harden themselves, perhaps, against attack, and so escape some pain on their own account, but they tend at this point to multiply ill-feeling rather than good.

On the other hand, however, it seems to be implied in the spirit of utilitarian ethics that a certain exercise of the Pleasures of Malignity may subjectively as well as objectively coincide with social progress ; since if it be necessary sometimes to inflict moral or literary punishment it must be beneficial to cultivate to a certain extent the faculty for the practice. And this raises the question how far the public and purposive indulgence in the Pleasures of Malignity may be subjectively beneficial.

One of the outstanding features in European ethical practice, from the dark ages down to last century, was the apparently universal feeling that it was a good discipline and a praiseworthy exercise for an independent gentleman to " go to the wars ", wherever the wars might happen to be. Nothing could ostensibly be more un-Christian, in one of the commoner senses of the term ; but neither clergy nor moralists seem ever to have condemned it. The official theory doubtless was that war might arise anywhere at any time, and that preparation was to be made in every available way ; but there was also the assumption that the discipline itself was good, as forming character ; and down to our own day, for instance in the writings of Mr. Ruskin, there has been abundant eulogy of the type of character evolved by war.

To these mostly rhapsodic dicta we can, of course, as students of ethics, pay no deference. They one and all, like Wordsworth's 'Character of the Happy Warrior', magnify the results of war in developing the pre-eminent warrior, and make little account of the general human significance of the fact that he is

"doomed to go in company with Pain  
And Fear, and Bloodshed, miserable train ;"

and, sooth to say, the poetic picture drawn of the warrior is usually far wide of the truth. On that point we need not stay : the responsibility for the soldier lies with us who employ him, and there an end. Soldiering is to be made an end of, as an anachronism, as soon as may be : the question is whether moral conflict, with its bloodless but still malevolent strife, can yield the ideal discipline held to be attained in war, while working not only no objective but no subjective evil. In one aspect, the discipline of war would seem to have a certain advantage. The ideal warrior has been in all civilised times one who passed rapidly from the fury of battle to the calm of courteous intercourse. He must not exult grossly over a dead foe : that was felt even in the Homeric age to be impious ; and Mr. Swinburne, calling the French Emperor "dog" after as he did before his death, falls below the classic standard.\* The warrior must

\* The Emperor, odious as he truly was, did not quite miss his mark when he laid down Hugo's *Châtiments* with the one word *Ignoble*.



bear no continuous hatred. But how often and how far has the ideal been realised? Let the story of our own great Civil War suffice for answer. If the malignities of political and other controversy be sometimes enduring and ignoble, so assuredly have been those of race feuds and faction hatreds which were waged with physical weapons; and if great commanders and brave soldiers could be placable and mutually respecting, so have been and so may be the leaders and the combatants in the wars of thought and of social predilection. Professor Bain, in his sketch of John Mill, gives us a short prose picture which will compare very well, ethically speaking, with Wordsworth's poetry:—

“There is great difficulty in arriving at the precise degree of the fundamental or elementary emotions in almost any mind, still more in Mill, who, by training or culture, was a highly complex product. The remark is applicable to the tender feeling viewed in its ultimate form; and even more to the other great source of human emotion—the Malevolent or irascible feeling. Unless conspicuously present, or conspicuously absent, the amount of feeling in the elementary shape can with difficulty be estimated in a character notable for growth, and for complication of impulses. In Mill, all the coarse, crude forms of angry passion were entirely wanting. He never got into a rage. His pleasures of malevolence, so far as existing, were of a very refined nature. Only in the punishment of offenders against his fellow-men, did he indulge revengeful sentiment. He could, on occasions, be very severe in his judgments and denunciations; but vulgar calumny, abuse, hatred for the mere sake of hatred, were completely crucified in him. He spent a large part of his life in polemics; and his treatment of opponents was a model of the ethics of controversy. The delight in victory was with him a genial, hearty chuckle, and no more.” \*

\* ‘J. S. Mill,’ p. 151.

Here then we have, in a very different sense from the original purport of Johnson's phrase, "a *good* hater"; one who can be both stern and placable; a vigorous foe and a well-wishing fellow citizen; one who seems never to have worsened in character for all his controversies. Pleasures of Malevolence he certainly had; but they never came near over-balancing his benevolent affections; any more than the passionate resentments of Shelley ever encroached on the wide range of his intense philanthropy. And this, I take it, must be the ideal for the age of intellectual and moral conflict, just as the temperate warrior, formidable in fight but soon serene in peace, was the ideal of ages in which men could not see beyond the necessity of war. Certainly we cannot at present see beyond the necessity of social antagonism; and though an utter disappearance of all Pleasures of Malignity be the ideal goal of moral evolution, it is quite certain that it is biologically impossible for even an appreciable minority of civilised men at present. It belongs theoretically to the Stage of Equilibrium, which is yet inconceivably remote. And thus the doctrine of non-resistance, instructive as pointing to a remote ideal, must be recognised as a biological impossibility for even an appreciable minority.

Its one modern propounder, Count Tolstoy, is to be understood only as having come to it in a certain physiological state, towards the

end of a long life well filled with the Pleasures of Malignity. There is in him, as his countryman Stepniak has recently well pointed out, something of the Oriental ; and it is in the Oriental that we find, contrasted with some of the extremest phases of indulgences in the Pleasures of Malignity, the nearest approach to the entire disappearance of them. The one extreme may conceivably follow the other in the same organism. And this suggests the need of remembering how the two swings of the pendulum are equally normal phases of the average moralised man. Most of the legendary or historical figures presented to us exhibit both ; and there is clearly nothing to be gained for ethics by the common practice of representing the Jesus of the Gospels as incapable of the Pleasures of Malevolence, when, as there pictured, he had them rather frequently ; or by the other practice of conceiving Paul in terms of his eloquent eulogy of love, and ignoring his only too frequent indulgence in the opposite emotion. The result of these false generalisations is that the plainest indulgences in malevolent feeling in any ethical or religious connection are no longer recognised by the religionists who commit them as malignities at all ; and we have the spectacle of bitter and demoralising malevolence predominating in the minds of would-be reformers, who tell themselves that no amount of such passion on their part can be injurious, since, like that of their religious exemplars, it is always directed against evil. I want



you to remember that the passion itself partakes of the nature of evil, and is vindicated only when a clear balance of objective and subjective good can be shown to issue.

And those who need the warning, remember, are not merely public teachers and combatants but private persons ; and not merely men but women; for it is very certain that while women have been historically non-combatants in civilised war, they are to the full as susceptible as men of the moral Pleasures of Malignity. They even exhibit some developments of malevolence from which the discipline of public strife tends to preserve men ; and since that discipline in the case of women is still but slightly available, there is the more need in their case for watchfulness. Especially do they tend, by reason of their special moral development in one or two directions, to excess of moral malevolence in connection with those points in conduct. Now, for individuals as for parties, there is this safe general test, that a chronic predominance or prolonged violence of malevolent feeling, whether it be called moral or political, or partisan or religious, means multiplication of evil ; and that the party or the person most frequently indulging in the Pleasures of Malignity, especially in the serious as distinct from the humorous form, is most likely to be working harm. Try by that test both parties and their leaders, and you will seldom go far wrong. Ask of a politician : does he oftener speak generously, sympathetically, hu-

manely, constructively, or bitterly, malignantly, harshly, destructively, and you have at least one trustworthy test of his work, if only you do not make the blunder of supposing that the superseding of worn-out beliefs and institutions by better ones is finally a process of destruction.

And, finally, as regards individual conduct, it is above all things important to realise that what most of us who concern ourselves about ethics have most to guard against is just excess of malevolence towards those whom we most confidently reckon evil-doers. The truth may be best put in the form of our paradox that punishment is for the good rather than for the bad. The man in whom moral tendencies predominate may be influenced for good by your censure or your satire; the man in whom immoral tendencies predominate will not be so influenced. To adopt, then, a course of invective and of humiliating exposure tending to make him wholly reprobate, is only to multiply evil in the name of good, a course plainly inexcusable in us who all admit that we at times fall into evil; since the principle of punishment to the uttermost may as fitly begin at a smaller sin as at a greater, among those who are to remain fellow-citizens, and who do not propose to destroy or imprison each other. It is the greater sinner who most claims our consideration, and the more commonly reprobated an offence is, the more cause is there for scrupulous people to beware of driving an

offender to worse courses. This is the principle that condemns the greater part of our official penal machinery—condemns it so decisively, that there are few offences against the law which a good and circumspect citizen will not wish or seek to screen and try to deal with privately rather than hand them over for public prosecution. Much more readily will he allow himself to arraign publicly—not private error, which even in private he should be quick to forgive, but the public wrong-doing, moral or intellectual, of the well-placed and the complacent, who are countenanced and not discountenanced by convention in their injustice or their unscrupulousness, because they are substantially and in intention on the side of morality. These he is not likely to dislike with too prolonged heat, since the sight of what is good in them can comparatively easily recall him to the philosophic recognition of universal frailty, which is so much commoner a frame of mind than the philosophic recognition of the cosmic nature of evil, and than pity for those who are the vessels of it. So will he enjoy his Pleasures of Malignity in the form least productive of evil and most productive of good; and so will he cultivate in his own person the best of those characteristics which we associate with the word chivalry and with the word generosity. That, we all admit, is not the ultimate ideal, but it is a tolerable working ideal for these days of social and intellectual strife. The Golden Age lies for ever beyond.



# INTERNATIONAL ETHICS.

A LECTURE.

(1897.)

As it is impossible to study individual ethics to any purpose save with an eye to the actual cases of every-day life, so it is impossible to discuss international ethics to any purpose save with an eye to actual international issues. To do this, however, involves meddling with matters of current politics, matters which to some extent involve party sympathies, if not party interests, and which it is not easy to discuss without sometimes giving personal offence where feelings have been warmly engaged: a drawback the more serious because such irritation tends to frustrate the main purpose of the inquiry. On the other hand, the very fact that feelings are so warmly engaged in these issues is in itself a reason for the entrance of the critical spirit, that so haply we may reach principles of action which will stand the same from one day to another, and so give us some such stability of code in international as we have in the majority of social relations. We can best, then, show the purity of our sympathies, whichever way they go, by consenting to apply to them, in the name of ethics, just such tests of comparison as we make in problems of justice and duty between man and man. If our concern is right action, we are bound to put aside our personal susceptibilities to the

extent of fairly facing all the relevant facts. And if I do not satisfy you of the impartiality of my inquiry, at least my attempt may help some who listen to carry it on to better purpose on their own account.

We have to consider a problem which is not at the moment so disturbing as it was a few months ago, having been in a manner allowed to pass aside ;\* but which was rather evaded, on grounds of expediency, than thought out in terms of moral science, and so may recur any day, in a more dangerously disturbing form than before. I refer, of course, to the problem raised by the demand among us for armed interference on the part of this country in the interests of the harried and decimated Christians of Armenia. A large body of our serious citizens—people not usually associated with display of the war spirit—were avowedly prepared to go to war in that quarrel ; protesting, of course, their earnest desire to see it settled without bloodshed ; but avowing that if bloodshed must come in the attempt, it were better than impotent acceptance of continued wrong. Such a serious proposal, coming from conscientious people, calls for a more thorough scrutiny in the name of ethics than it has yet received in the name of politics. And first we must look at it in the open daylight of general history, in its true perspective.

\* This was spoken before the outbreak in Crete, which led to the Græco-Turkish war.

It is a little over forty years since one of the great English poets of the century gave his counsel to his countrymen on a burning question of international politics, in a poem which is perhaps the most lyrically inspired of all his works. The counsel was to the effect that a great war, not of self-defence but of punishment, was an admirable and beneficent expression of a nation's spirit, every way preferable to a state of peace flawed by industrial misery and commercial deceit. On this theme the poet's song reaches its most fervent rhythms :

“And as months rolled on, and rumor of battle grew,  
‘It is time, it is time, O passionate heart,’ said I  
(For I cleaved to a cause that I felt to be pure and true),  
‘It is time, O passionate heart and morbid eye,  
That old, hysterical, mock disease should die.’  
And I stood on a giant deck, and mix’d my breath  
With a loyal people, shouting a battle-cry,  
Till I saw the dreary phantom arise and fly  
Far into the North, and battle, and seas of death.  
Let it go or stay, so I wake to the higher aims  
Of a land that has lost for a little her lust of gold,  
And love of a peace that was full of wrongs and shames,  
Horrible, hateful, monstrous, not to be told ;  
And hail once more to the banner of battle unroll’d !  
Tho’ many a light shall darken and many shall weep  
For those that are crush’d in the clash of jarring claims,  
Yet God’s just doom shall be wreak’d on a giant liar ;  
And many a darkness into the light shall leap,  
And shine in the sudden making of splendid names,  
And noble thought be freer under the sun,  
And the heart of a people beat with one desire ;  
For the long, long canker of peace is over and done,  
And now by the side of the Black and the Baltic deep,  
And deathful-grinning mouths of the fortress, flames  
The blood-red blossom of war, with a heart of fire.”



That was how Tennyson, in 1854, glorified the Crimean war, just begun, and vituperated Russia, the adversary. In later editions of 'Maud', he modified a few words. "God's just doom" became "God's just wrath", when it was found that the "doom" did not come to pass; and "The long, long canker of peace" became "the peace that I deemed no peace"; but there was added this strophe, affirming the general doctrine:

"Let it flame or fade, and the war roll down like a wind;  
We have proved we have hearts in a cause, we are noble  
still,  
And myself have awaked, as it seems, to the better mind;  
It is better to fight for the good than to rail at the ill;  
I have felt with my native land, I am one with my kind.  
I embrace the purpose of God, and the doom assign'd."

It is well to recall the merits of the quarrel thus sung. We have been told of late that these old stories should not be raked up. Old stories should never be raked up where the raking up will do nothing but rekindle malice; but where the objects in view are knowledge and wisdom, and the prevention of future malice, we cannot too fully consider the facts. And in this case we shall not find ourselves tempted to blame anybody more than ourselves on our own side. The Crimean war, then, was undertaken by this country in resentment of the claims of the Russian Government to champion the Greek Christian Church against the Latin at Jerusalem, and to create a protectorate over the Greek Christians in Turkey.

That is to say, the quarrel on the Russian side was nominally religious ; and the entire war may be traced to the shameful quarrels of the competing tribes of Christians at the legendary birthplace and tomb of Jesus, where the Turks have from time immemorial had to preserve the peace, and prevent the Christians from cutting each other's throats. In the year 1847, the Greek Christians were charged with removing a silver star which was hung in the air in one of the Latin chapels by way of marking one of the places where the Savior was born. Then the Christian Government of France interfered on behalf of Latin Christianity, and Christian Russia came promptly forward on behalf of Greek Christianity ; and the Porte, against which there was then no charge of massacring Christians—its relation to Christianity having consisted in preventing Christians from massacring each other—was bullied by the Christian Powers alternately, till France and England and the King of Sardinia joined in defending Turkey against Russia, with the results we all remember.

In that quarrel, public opinion in England was substantially united. In the preface to a standard ' History of the Ottoman Empire ', by four writers of good standing, published in 1854, allusion is made to " the deep interest now so universally felt in the fate of Turkey, linked as that fate has become with the interests of civilisation throughout the world." That was the general tone. On

both sides, indeed, the war was one of popular enthusiasm. As Molesworth records\* : " In the churches of Russia and the mosques of Turkey a crusade was preached with the most vehement enthusiasm." The religious attack bred the religious counter-crusade, Turks being as warlike as other people ; and the Turkish Government was forced to meet Russian menace with defiance, to save itself at home. So it was in England. The only two public men who steadfastly opposed English interference, Bright and Cobden, were for the time virtually driven out of public life, and the Press backed up Lord Palmerston in forcing a war policy on his colleagues. " Thus," says Molesworth :

" England, under the influence of panic and passion, was being propelled . . . into a war which all reasonable men desired to avoid, and which by judicious management might have been avoided. And what was the reason of this? The chief cause, it appears to me, is to be found in that secret and mysterious system of diplomacy which did not prevent the English people from seeing much of what was going on, but which did not allow them to see the whole truth ; which revealed to them the faults of the Russian Emperor, but cast a mantle over the nearly equal faults of the Turkish Government ; which led the English to regard the Czar as a monster of perfidy and ambition, when he really was a proud but well-intentioned man, blinded by passion and fanaticism. . . . The people saw the occupation of the provinces, the tragedy of Sinope, and other violent and foolish acts of the Russian Government, as through a lurid haze, and thus Lord Aberdeen was driven towards a policy which he thoroughly abhorred. ' Here I am,' he exclaimed to his intimate friends, ' with

\* ' History of England,' 1830-1874. Abridged ed. p. 346.



one foot in the grave, placed against my will at the head of the Ministry, and forced on to that bloodshed against which, throughout the whole of my public career, I have hitherto successfully struggled:’ and the old man wrung his hands in an agony of impotent despair. Like the doomed vessel which has entered the vortex of the Maelstrom, he was being drifted into war.”

What the war was, there is no need to say in any detail. Mismanagement and misery in the British camp ; decimation of the army by cold and disease ; desultory operations by ill-united allies ; distracted counsels ; heroic exploits, leading to nothing but futile slaughter ; magnificent episodes which “ were not war ” ; dreary sufferings which were ; enormous efforts for the capture of one fortified place ; trivial triumph for a vast outlay of blood and treasure ; and then peace and jubilation, and the *status quo ante bellum*, with Greek and Latin Christians still glaring murder at each other in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, and the heathen Turk still keeping the peace between them.

And now, without for the moment tracing what has occurred between times, let us contrast the picture of a few months ago. Again we have a poet splendidly singing for war—the poet who, of all in our day, best compares with Tennyson in nobility of art and golden perfectness of diction—the true inheritor of the Tennysonian mantle. But this time the song is on the other side. Instead of the “ doom of God on a giant liar ” we have the doom of God on the Great Assassin. Instead of Turkey representing the interests of civilisation, these interests are said to depend on

Turkey's overthrow. Russia is now the friend of humanity ; and there is talk of handing over to her the Christian provinces which the Moslem has deluged with blood. In England, though not with the old approach to unanimity, there are the old transports of enthusiasm through whole strata of society. What is more, whereas in 1854 the anti-Russian feeling here was only in part religious, only in part one of sectarian Christianity, the feeling is now in very large part one of Christian wrath against the Moslem assassin of Christians. This, of course, is denied ; but I must take leave to insist on the statement. If anyone will try to imagine a similar storm of English feeling against, say, a Shah of Persia for exterminating a heretical non-Christian sect, as the Bâbîs were exterminated in 1852 ; or against, say, China for the massacre of the members of any Chinese sect—if anyone will try to imagine such developments of feeling among us, he will find they are inconceivable. Were Christian Spain to-day in a position to expel a population of Mohammedans, as she did in the beginning of the seventeenth century, we might charge her with suicidal folly and fanaticism, as well as with atrocious cruelty, but we should not think of interfering. We may depend upon it, the Christianity of the Armenians has been for thousands of our countrymen the determining ground for proposing the coercion of Turkey, though they may often not be clearly conscious of it. And it is important to keep this in

view. It was a kindred though less justified feeling among Russian Christians which in 1854 and since did most to inspire Russian fervor against Turkey. The community of instinct in the matter is instructive.

It may be said indeed that, whether the fact be so or not, the English sentiments of 1896 were far more justifiable than those of 1854; that in the recent case the English people in large part really rose above some of their old commercial jealousies, and cared for nothing but the protection of the downtrodden. This I do not dispute. But the question which clearly forces itself upon us is this: Is that nation justifiable which, within a space of forty years, is seen thus alternately storming for war against Russia, on behalf of Turkey; and for war in alliance with Russia, against Turkey? Are those ups and downs of emotion suggestive of good judgment or consistency of attitude? Are those admirable poets trustworthy ethical guides?

Let us not answer hastily; but first analyse our problem, to make sure what it really is. When we talk of nations doing this and that, we are lumping complex facts for convenience under a loose phrase. To think always of nations as single-minded entities is to obscure the facts of international life. In a sense, nations cannot be convicted of inconsistency as individuals may, though the inconsistency of individuals often goes far to constitute inconsistency on the part of the nation. We are not responsible, it may fairly be



urged, for acts of our predecessors of which we do not approve, or for acts of our domestic opponents. In the recent episode, one part of our nation resisted the proposals of another; and those who are ready to coerce Turkey are many of them entitled to say that they never approved of the Crimean war. And that brings us to the intermediate facts of the Russo-Turkish history. When, some twenty years ago, Russia once more attacked Turkey, again avowedly in the interests of the Sultan's Christian subjects, the Government of this country, standing to the position of 1854, designed to aid Turkey as then; and were only prevented doing so by the movement of public feeling set up by Mr. Gladstone in his denunciation of the Turkish atrocities in Bulgaria. But, despite that hindrance, our Government did on the whole hinder that of the Czar in its professed attempt to protect the Armenian and other Christian subjects of Turkey. We are now proposing, many of us, to reverse what we did then. Our problem, then, seems to be something like this: *Do bodies of well-meaning citizens do well to seek to engage the nation as a whole, by the exercise of its military power, in any act of intervention in the internal affairs of a foreign country, in the knowledge that the nation as a whole was so engaged, a generation ago, in an act of intervention to a directly opposite purpose, and that much more recently, despite domestic division of opinion, its influence as a military power was to a certain extent again used to that opposite purpose?*

It may be squarely answered by many that men may be doing quite well in such a case ; that the wrong action of their country in the previous generation ought not to bind or silence them under changed conditions now. And I admit that the general proposition is quite arguable ; for, in a sense, we are always to some extent undoing, of necessity, the deeds and the plans of our fathers. But to judge justly, we must look to more than our present motives. We have to test our doctrine by analogy, and compare our moral position in one issue with our moral position in another—*our* moral position, be it observed, not that of our predecessors, for it happens that, almost simultaneously with the recent demand for the coercion of Turkey by England, singly or in concert with other Powers, there occurred a case in which there emerged for a moment the conception of a possible dream of the coercion of England by other Powers. None of us can yet have forgotten it. When the filibustering raid of certain British subjects into the Transvaal was defeated, the Emperor of Germany sent a telegram of congratulation to the Transvaal President. That sufficiently tactless act was received in England with a perfect passion of resentment ; and, though the telegram probably meant no more than it said, which was not much, it was treated as a broad hint that if matters went further, Germany might interfere on the Boers' behalf. And at a London banquet, presided over by a minister of the Crown, shortly

afterwards, the Minister's declaration that "under no circumstances should we for a moment tolerate foreign interference" in South Africa was vehemently acclaimed by all present. And this did not merely mean, observe, that "we" should resent armed interference between us and the Boers; it meant that "we" denied the right of any Power to attempt diplomatic interference.

Of course, as will be at once said, the cases were very different. The act of our filibusters was venial in comparison with the abominable and unwearying cruelties of the Turks against the miserable Armenians. In point of degree of guilt there is no comparison. Turkey is several centuries behind England in civilisation; and Turkish atrocities are on the plane of the Turkish stage of civilisation. But since we have begun collating the cases, let us collate them at a point where comparison is more feasible. Let us go back in English history a few centuries, to a point at which English civilisation was in some respects near the present Turkish level, albeit in other respects far above it. Let us go back to the age of Shakspeare, and Sidney, and Spenser, the age of Elizabeth and the Armada; the age of heroic Protestantism and of the beginnings of Puritanism; and let us imagine a studious member of the Turkish Embassy in London addressing us on the Elizabethan way of dealing with disaffection in Ireland, as thus:

"In those days, your Christian and Protestant



nobles, serving under your Virgin Queen, carried out in Christian and Catholic Ireland such massacres as well-nigh eclipse our Turkish atrocities in the comparison. The provocation was relatively slight. In Turkey to-day, the Armenians, many of whom so long farmed our taxes, are regarded by our ignorant and fanatical population as irksome interlopers, usurers, undercutting and unscrupulous competitors in trade, as well as infidels ; and, while the official massacres are to be set down to official cruelty and the brutality of the professional soldier class, the Constantinople outrages are the outcome of all this old-standing jealousy, roused to murderous passion by the news of a revolutionary conspiracy. It is certainly all vile and abominable enough. But let us go back to the deeds of your Protestant forefathers, at a stage of civilisation at which your race could produce a Shakspeare, a Bacon, a Spenser. Let me read to you the words in which some of those concerned in the official massacres of the Popish inhabitants of Ireland described their performances. It is the godly and Bible-loving Lord-Deputy Chichester who writes :

“‘I burned all along the Lough (Neagh), within four miles of Dungannon, and killed 100 people, sparing none, of what quality, age, or sex, soever, besides many burned to death. We killed man, woman, and child, horse, beast, and whatsoever we could find.’

“‘It is Sir Nicholas Malby, President of Con-

naught, who writes thus of his harrying of the Burkes' country :

“With determination to consume them with fire and sword, sparing neither old nor young, I entered their mountains, I burnt all their corn and houses, and committed to the sword all that could be found. . . . I assaulted a castle where the garrison surrendered. I put them to the misericordia of my soldiers. They were all slain.’

“That was the direct slaughter. But for every one slain by the sword, perhaps a hundred perished by the far direr death of famine, famine deliberately planned and wrought by the English commanders, who found they could kill more by starvation than by any other means. And your ancestors looked on ; and your poet Spenser describes sights such as will compare in horror with anything in modern history, down to and including the Armenian atrocities. The native annalists tell that the English soldiers twirled infants on the points of their spears, drove unresisting men and women into barns and burned them to death, and killed blind and feeble men, women, boys, and girls, sick persons, idiots, and old people. And it is the English Froude who comments :

“The English nation was shuddering over the atrocities of the Duke of Alva. The children in the nurseries were being inflamed to patriotic rage and madness by tales of Spanish tyranny ; yet Alva's bloody sword never touched the young, the defenceless, or those whose sex even dogs could recognise and respect.’”

If the unspeakable Turk were thus to speak, I do not see how we could effectively answer him. It might be replied, of course, that we to-day re-

probate those old English cruelties as much as we do those of the Turks in Armenia ; that we are not responsible for our ancestors. But that is really not the point. The pertinent ethical question is this:—If the Spanish Armada of 1588, which actually was in part provoked by the English massacres of Irish Catholics, had been avowedly undertaken expressly in order to punish these, and to save Ireland from them for the future ; if, instead of expressing a Catholic desire to suppress Protestantism as such, it had been a simple expression of just indignation at Protestant cruelty, should we to-day look back upon it with any more sympathy than we actually do? Should we consider it a justifiable invasion? I confess I cannot for a moment believe that we should. That is to say, those citizens who have been calling for the coercion of Turkey would not cease to take the patriotic view of the Armada. They would just point to the cruelties of the Spaniards in Mexico and Peru, as the English of the Elizabethan age did, and as those of Dryden's age exclaimed at the cruelties of the Protestant Dutch.

Finally, to come down nearer our own day ; supposing that Napoleon had invaded Ireland at the close of last century to punish the horrible cruelties committed by our troops in the suppression of the Irish rebellion of 1798, and to relieve the Irish Catholics from the tyranny under which they had lain so long ; or supposing that the in-



vasion which was actually attempted, and failed, had been undertaken expressly, as it was partly, in resentment of the long and ruinous misgovernment of Ireland by England, should we to-day applaud the French in the matter? Again, I must say, I do not think we should. Many of us are still so far from taking a decently impartial view of international ethics as to fail even to see the unjustifiableness of Pitt's policy, pushed on by Burke, of forcing war on the new French Republic, with a view to destroying it, in punishment for the execution of the king and queen, and to the end of rooting out democratic principles. We are still in the day of blind instincts, blind patriotism, blind indignation, blind religious zeal. And when it is thus clear that we can never answer for our own nation in respect of its own misdeeds, and that we can never be sure that in a given crisis its rulers will not seek to use its military power in a way of which many of us utterly disapprove, it surely becomes no less clear that we do ill, any number of us, to propose to use its military power to coerce any other nation, Christian or other, into right courses in its internal affairs, no matter how gross may be the misconduct which has aroused our indignation. The principle will not stand ethical tests.

I say the principle, in the general sense. I have thus far looked at the case in the light of the fundamental moral principle of doing as we would be done by. It may still be urged, however, that

it may be well at a pinch even to override that principle, if haply by so doing we can save innocent lives from frightful suffering. Here the test is one of empirical utility, or hand-to-mouth opportunism. And here again I will admit that the point is arguable. In recent times, it may be urged, we actually have coerced aliens in such matters as the suppression of the slave-trade, though less than two centuries ago our fathers were the great slave-traders of Europe. What happened in that case was that the more humane of our nation gradually got the upper hand of the inhumane; so that we have seen Mr. Gladstone, whose father was a slaveholder, and who in his early youth defended the management of his father's slave-estates in Parliament, live not only to repent his partial sympathy with the cause of the South in the American Civil War, but to take concerted steps, as a Minister, with other Powers, for the suppression of the slave-trade nearer home. Yet even here our record is somewhat chequered. When, less than thirty years ago, the then Khedive of Egypt undertook, in defiance of a strong feeling among his own subjects, to suppress the slave-trade in the Soudan, our Press was far from giving him sympathy and encouragement. On this we have the decisive testimony of Sir Samuel Baker, whom the Khedive employed to do the work.

"Few persons," writes Sir Samuel, "have considered

the position of the Egyptian ruler when attacking the institution most cherished by his people. The employment of an European to overthrow the slave-trade in deference to the opinion of the civilised world, was a direct challenge and attack upon the assumed rights and necessities of his own subjects. The magnitude of the operation cannot be understood by the general public in Europe. Every household in Upper Egypt and in the Delta was dependent upon slave service; the fields in the Soudan were cultivated by slaves; the women in the harems of both rich and middle-class were attended by slaves; the poorer Arab woman's ambition was to possess a slave; in fact, Egyptian society without slaves would be like a carriage devoid of wheels—it could not proceed." And while the Khedive "sacrificed his popularity in Egypt, his policy was misconstrued by the Powers he had sought to gratify. He was accused of civilising 'through the medium of fire and sword' by the same English journals which are now (1878) extolling the prowess of the British arms in Caffraria and the newly-annexed Transvaal."\*

Here, observe, was a Mohammedan ruler trying to suppress slavery under difficulties such as were probably never grappled with by any Christian ruler; yet we give to the memory of the late Khedive no such honor as we pay to Christian emancipators. May it not be, one asks in passing, that his experience of Christian justice may have had something to do with the indifference of later Moslem rulers to Christian appeals for interference with slave-trading?

Still, let us suppose the point of immediate utility pressed, without regard to the point of consistency. Would it be well, then, to resort to armed coercion of a Moslem Power in order to

\* Sir S. Baker, 'Ismailia,' ed. 1878, pref.



protect its Christian subjects? Let us apply the test of utility, of expediency, all round, and with vigilance. What, let us ask, would such a war mean? Let us say nothing of the fact that the burden of the cost would largely fall on poor men, and that the men sent as soldiers would be anybody but the people who clamored for the war. Let us simply imagine the campaign. Some among us picture a mere display of naval and military power, and an immediate collapse of the Porte, the Sick Man, as we have been calling the Sultans of Turkey for at least fifty years. Others, however, even on the same side, point out that the recent massacres are fruits of the Turkish system, that at least there must be a change of Sultans; and that even a change of Sultans would give small security for the future. Then it is suggested that Armenia, or for that matter all Turkey, should be handed over to Russia. Thus are the problems of international ethics still grappled with among us. It may perhaps suffice to say here that those who think to dispose of the Turks in mass in that fashion have miscalculated rather badly. They suppose the Turkish nation has little power of resistance; hence their readiness to attack it—another unpleasing feature of our international ethics. We never talk of so attacking a military power believed to be strong, no matter how much we may sympathise with its victims—be it Austria tyrannising in Italy in the last generation, or

Prussia coercing Denmark. We select the Sick Man, so called, as a hopeful case. Yet those who look deepest into the matter will probably be the most ready to admit that an attempt to overthrow the Turkish power would be met with a national resistance of such energy and tenacity as might make even a coalition of invading Powers glad to come to a compromise. Russian invasions of Turkey in the past have not gone to show that Turkey was very much the sicker power of the two. And meantime, what would be the fate of the surviving Armenians? If Khurds and Turks shed blood as we have seen when their country is *not* being invaded on behalf of the Armenians, what would they do if it were?

And if, by a desperate effort, involving the shedding of blood in a thousandfold degree, a coalition of European Powers should succeed in beating down the Turkish nation, and should then agree to hand over either Turkey or Armenia to Russian control, what then? England would so exhibit herself in the eyes of Europe as strictly disinterested—a character she is certainly not usually held by foreigners to fulfil. But would the gain to civilisation be so great, after all? Are many of us of opinion that the management of Russian home affairs by the Russian Government is quite a triumphant contrast with the internal polity of Turkey? Let us assume, if we will, that we ourselves, “we” as a nation, are blameless; and that our rule in Ireland can give no scandal to

French and Germans. And let us forget our old sympathies with the Poles — “the Irish of the Continent,” as our Prince Albert called them. But can we really bring ourselves to feel that the rule which has deported to Siberia and done to death in dungeons so many thousands of justice-seeking, humanity-loving, and high-hoping men and women—so often for nothing more than the bare cherishing of their hopes—is a rule we should like to see imposed on any other country? To be sure, most of the exiled Nihilists are Atheists; but are they really worse men and women than the Armenians? And when we remember how a few years ago the same autocracy drove out of Russia myriads of Jews, on the score of their race and their creed, can we feel that it is quite a safe sort of authority to set up over Moslems anywhere? If our Christian philanthropists can wink at wholesale cruelty to Atheists, can they be quite as indifferent to the expulsion of the Russian Jews? Were not the reasons given for that expulsion very like some of the Turkish reasons for massacring Armenians? Is it that we are to tolerate wholesale expulsion and deportation, and only to draw the line at massacre?

Surely, surely, this problem is not to be solved as so many among us have thought to solve it. Surely we must carry our international ethics a little further, a little deeper. Surely the principles of goodwill, of persuasion, of curative education, must count for something in international as in



domestic policy. Do we ever ask ourselves how the Turkish civilisation has come to be so backward, so unprogressive, the Government so bad in itself, so powerless to check the ferocity and fanaticism of its subjects, even when it would fain do so? The question is well worth putting. Buckle said he could write the history of Turkish civilisation on the back of his hand. I wish he had done it, even on that scale, with his exact and comprehensive knowledge, and his luminous breadth of view. But in the back-of-the-hand fashion we might try it for ourselves.

Perhaps you may think it shows an unhealthy sympathy with a guilty race to try to estimate its conditions dispassionately. I can only say on that, that I have no special sympathy with Turks, no such esteem for them as many English travellers have expressed. It is not easy for a rationalist to get up a special sympathy with the most religious nation in Europe—for such is Turkey. Those moralists who hold that a belief in Deity is the great moralising principle in human affairs should take due note of the fact that Turkey is the most devoutly God-fearing nation in existence. And those Christians who see in almsgiving the great test of the degree and sincerity of a man's philanthropy, should take due notice of the fact that in Turkey there is proportionately more almsgiving done than in any other European country. The average Turk is the typical God-fearing man, and a daily benefactor of the poor. Still, all this

does not draw us to him. Professor Flint, if I remember rightly, has somewhere published a letter addressed to him by a Turkish gentleman, expressing the hope that his nation, as a race of unflinching theists, will one day co-operate powerfully with the theists of other countries in maintaining the doctrine of one God. And *this*, in view of recent events, does not draw us to him either. But still we may so explain Turkish civilisation as to give a more humane and a more hopeful view of it than is taken by those who pronounce it past saving, and those who, like Mr. Gladstone, talk of driving the Turk, "bag and baggage", out of Europe—on the good old judicial principle of telling bad characters to go and live in some other parish. It is instructive to meet with these prescriptions, as a practical outcome of the religion which professes to inculcate universal brotherhood, the love of enemies, and the inevitable conversion of all mankind to the true faith.

Mere human reason, when it can rise above the crude instincts through which it first comes into play, gradually arrives at a humaner view. It decides that the Turks are not any more innately insusceptible of civilisation and progress than any other race, European or Asian. Like all other races, so called, they have long been very much mixed; and they have among them the blood, as the phrase goes, of ancient Romans, Greeks, Arabs, Assyrians, Persians, and other stocks, "Aryan" and "non-Aryan". And they are not

at all normally ferocious, though when the beast in them is roused they behave as we know, as our ancestors behaved three centuries ago, ay, and one century ago. Their vices are of three main sorts—the animal vices of a backward civilisation; the civic vices of an old militarist despotism; the intellectual vices of a people hypnotised by a Sacred Book. In respect of these they conform at a variety of points to one or other of all the known civilisations of the past, including our own; exhibiting in general the same laws, the same potentialities. And that they have so long been unprogressive is due, on the one hand to their pietism, which shuns new ideas, and on the other hand to their isolation in a hostile Christian world, which keeps them constantly menaced with fanatical attack, and thus aloof from the ideas of other lands. At this moment, what of energy Turkey has is mainly spent on her military establishments. Proportionately to her wealth, she is enormously militarist; what provision she makes for the scientific training of her youth is mainly military; and this perforce, from the Turkish point of view, because the Turkish Empire, ever since its establishment, has been confronted by Christian enemies seeking its destruction.

It may be said that this is the penalty of the original act of conquest. Very true; but the question for modern Europe, partly delivered from fanaticism, is whether the ancient curse must for ever operate. For centuries the neighbour



Powers, Russia and Austria, inheritors of the medieval Christian feud with Islam, have made the Turks feel that they must arm or perish. Thus Turkey's whole strength and thought, apart from religion, runs to militarism, with the natural results. Must this dead-lock for ever subsist? If so, the Armenian question in some form must subsist; and Turkey will continue to be a thorn in the side of civilised Europe. But if only the Christian nations, so called, can learn to adopt a spirit of fraternity, instead of one of scorn and hostility, they may not only secure by moral suasion such measures as were taken by the late Khedive of Egypt under the mere pressure of opinion, but may lead to the gradual cure of the worst vices of Turkish civil administration. During the past seventy years, intercourse between Constantinople and the rest of Europe has continually increased; with the result that in spite of all the inertia of Islam, and all the mind-benumbing power of the Sacred Book, a new sap stirs in the nation's frame, and change proceeds both outwardly and inwardly. It only needs that this should be furthered by peaceful intercourse rather than repressed by violence, till there too the ancient reign of despotism shall give place to a progressive compromise, in which the human spirit shall grow to what of dignity and self-rule is possible to it. Fifty years ago, a correspondent of the *Times*, following the fortunes of Kossuth from Hungary to Turkey, decided after study that

nothing could save Turkey from internal decay while her Government remained despotic. One day, he was convinced, the State must fall ; but one day Russia, too, might fall in the same fashion, unless " some violent uprising of the popular impulses " availed to subvert the evil system.\* That is a principle which holds good of all civilisations, all races whatsoever. There can be no permanently healthy and happy civilisation under a despotism, be it of Sultan, Czar, Emperor, Pope, priest, church, mollah, or prophet.

Many will doubtless say that the case is past hope. Such verdicts are always forthcoming. The sufficient answer is this, that if the Turkish civilisation be hopeless, there is no sign of anything much more hopeful among the Levantine populations. Let us remember, the verdict of many generations was as decisive against Greeks and Armenians as it has latterly been against the Turks. The writer whom I have just cited quotes it as " an established maxim which has prevailed in the Levant from time immemorial, that no reliance can be placed on the words of either Greek or Armenian."† And when the Greeks made their war of independence, it was a current saying in this country that many men went hence to the Peloponnesus to help, expecting to find the men of Pericles, and came back convinced that the inhabitants of Newgate were the more moral types.

\* Pridham, ' Kossuth and Magyarland,' 1851, p. 298.

† Work cited, p. 285.

Greece has since made great progress, though not all that was hoped ; but that any progress has been made is clearly due not to innate or hereditary virtues in the stock, which has much in common with the Turkish. It is due to the effect of education and free institutions, which can purify a nation's blood even when they fever it. The Turks have just as many fundamental good points to work upon as the rival races, Asian, Greek, and Slav. Kossuth has told the story of the refusal of the Sultan to give him up, with his fellow fugitives from Hungary, when they sought Turkish protection, though Austria threatened war. The counsellors of the Porte in Divan advised surrender ; but the Sultan, Abdul Medjid, rose from his seat, lifted up his hands, and said : "Allah is powerful, I trust in his protection. But if I must perish, may I perish with honour. I will not bring upon my name the disgrace of violating the rights of hospitality, by surrendering to the vengeance of their enemies the unfortunates who have sought my protection. . . . Having sought it, they shall obtain it. Come what may, I will not surrender them. This is my determination, and thus it shall be. Consider the means of defence."\* So that, if some Commanders of the Faithful be great assassins, mad or sane, others have been brave men and true.

In fine, we do but reach the old lesson that the

\* Kossuth, 'Memories of my Exile,' Eng. tr. Pref.



Kingdom of Heaven cometh *not* by violence. Turkey is worse to-day for the Crimean War, for past war in general. The sword is *not* a civiliser; and under its shadow there grow all manner of poisonous plants and creeping things. We have all, I think, come to this view in face of the recent risks of war between our nation and the kindred republic beyond seas. That such a chance should be made, either by the obstinacy of an English statesman who refused to arbitrate in a difference with a small State because he held our case to be too good to permit of dispute, or by the wantonness of tongue of an American statesman, bidding for Anglophobe votes, is for most of us a thing to shudder over. Happily, reason and goodwill have on both sides prevailed; and this, with other shadows of evil of the past year, has passed away. Few men now affect to believe with Tennyson, that a war cures any of the wrongs and shames of peace, or makes noble thought freer. But the gain from the lesson will not be secure unless, in congratulating ourselves on our escape, we also take to heart the need for a more worthy and more self-examining spirit among us all in the future. The great safeguard against a wanton yielding to the stirrings of primeval passion against other States, is a habit of remembering the misdeeds of our own; and the answer to all the voices of national and spiritual pride, be they of poet or of priest, is that old one, so seldom acted on by those who profess to hold it divine:

“First take the beam out of thine own eye.”  
 Cure the evils at home, the age-long miseries that  
 subsist in silence, without noise and garments  
 rolled in blood; the systems which slay by law  
 and without weapons, making thousands home-  
 less in the name of justice and the sacred rights of  
 possession. Mr. Watson, in one of his Armenian  
 poems, has a fine verse, picturing the houseless  
 victims, roofed only by

“Cold splendors of the inhospitable night,  
 Augustly unregardful.”

But these pitiless fires have shone as coldly, if not  
 as splendidly, in northern skies, over maddened  
 Irish peasants, and expatriated Highland clans-  
 men, and starving English vagrants, as over the  
 tortured wretches of Armenia; and our great  
 poets have never sung for those. And he best  
 reads the lesson of the stars who learns under  
 them to feel, not the transient passion of wrath  
 against the criminals of a day, but the  
 sadness of the endless errancy of man.  
 Beneath that canopy, the poet's own most  
 passionate cry, urging us to war, becomes  
 one with the other voices of Nature, not to  
 be taken as oracles of any God. If we cannot  
 trust our Press, if we cannot trust our pulpit, to  
 speak the words of wisdom and soberness in times  
 of perturbation, how shall we trust our poets?  
 When the multitude of counsellors fail to exorcise  
 evil instinct, how shall the lyrist as such succeed?

It is no special imputation on him to mark him

for distrust when we must distrust teachers from whom at times we have had steady light and leading. Burke, who in his sane days denounced with noble passion the heedless promoters of war between kindred, lived to be miserably false to his own teaching, to preach a war of civilisations with the voice of a madman, glorying in its duration, its fierceness, its bloodiness. The beast beneath, emerging through some flaw of blood and brain, had triumphed in him over the humanist and the sane statesman. If such men fail us, how shall we trust our own random impulses, our own spontaneous enthusiasms? Are not both sides in every quarrel alike enthusiastic? If the Kingdom of Heaven, from the transcendental point of view, cometh not by observation; from that of moral science, to which the Kingdom of Heaven is well-being on earth, it does so come, and in no other way; and the moral value of enthusiasm to create and uphold good can be secured only by submitting it on every issue to the unchanging tests of all conduct—consistency, utility, rectitude.

Some time ago I had the opportunity of hearing a distinguished living statesman deliver an address at the unveiling of one more Burns statue in a Scotch town. It was a brilliant address, witty, intelligent, broad in view, and finished in phrase; but, though attentively listened to, it evoked no great applause. One speculated whether at length the native worship of Burns was becoming self-critical, after being so long otherwise, or whether



it was that the touches of other criticism in the address were not sufficiently agreeable to the patriotic sense. At length the audience was of a sudden roused into signal excitement and applause; but it was not over anything about Burns and Scottish culture. It was over a passage on the value of enthusiasm, as shown at that hour, "when a mighty wave of moral passion is sweeping over the land, and we see what we can see in no other country—a nation alight with disinterested moral enthusiasm, with a towering indignation against the oppressor, and a glowing sympathy with the oppressed." As soon as the cheering was over, it was clear what had happened. The audience had been simply applauding themselves. It was the sentiment of Tennyson over again: "We are noble still"—we are very fine people indeed, full of noble and disinterested sympathy—with the victims of *other* peoples.

When it has come to that with us it is time to retrace our steps in sober retrospect. If it is our own virtue that thrills us, our sympathy has already lost *its* virtue; its springs are tainted. Its original generosity is worn out when we plume ourselves on our generosity. And this is finally what is wrong with international ethics everywhere: men allow themselves, in national capacities and in international relations, all manner of self-praise and arrogance and scorn, which in individual relations, whether between them and

foreigners or between fellow-citizens, would be counted odious, and expressive of coarse and ill-bred natures. To this limitation of average moral judgment is to be traced the inveterate survival of the spirit of war. When Grotius wrote his great treatise on the ' Law of War and Peace ', he lamented that, though one God was the father of all men, all nations were madly ready to go to war with each other, the Christians being worse than the barbarians. He hoped his treatise might lead them to mend their ways ; but though it may have modified some of the usages of war, it has in no wise cast out the passion. So that we to-day have a right to say that the ideal of the Fatherhood of God, and the ethic annexed to that ideal, have failed from age to age to teach men to live as brothers ; and that the hopes of humanity in the future must centre on the growth of the spirit which seeks to solve all human problems in the light of human reason and human experience, testing all instincts as it tests all dogmas and all beliefs.

# EQUALITY.

A LECTURE.

(1886.)

“EQUALITY,” says a distinguished living judge, in a book that is less heard of to-day than it was ten years ago—“equality, like liberty, appears to me to be a big name for a small thing.”\* It seems probable that, though the speaker is a jurist, he does not here say quite what he means. To say that equality or liberty is a big name, is to say that it points to a great aspiration or an important principle; in which case the sentence is either a mere contradiction in terms, or a simple assertion that the results men have to show for the democratic creed fall very far short of the ideal. That is, liberty and equality, as conceived by those who framed and those who have adopted the well-known motto, were terms implying a great amount of unattained good; while it turns out that mere liberty so far as we have or can at present have it, and equality so far as it has gone or can yet go in Europe, leave a great deal to be desired. So be it: but the fact surely goes to prove rather that the true liberty and the true equality are very great things; that the big names are really big names in the only intelligible sense—that of expressing

\* James Fitzjames Stephen, ‘Liberty, Equality, Fraternity,’ 1873, p. 253.



great ideas, none the less great because still to be realised. And in this connection it may be permitted to wonder somewhat at the zeal with which some powerful minds in these days set themselves to blacken and belittle what was after all, on the face of it, the formula of an ideal condition to be aimed at and not a description of what had been attained. Other ideals receive an astonishingly lenient treatment in comparison. The aims of primitive Christianity, let it be remembered, have sometimes been sketched in terms almost identical with the Republican motto—I will not say with what amount of accuracy—and the claim in that case seems to be regarded as its own vindication. It is not now seriously pretended that the ideal first Christians achieved their ends any more than the enthusiasts of later times ; but it seems to be imputed as a virtue to the former that they *had* an ideal ; while the too high hopes of the latter seem to be viewed as mere matter for contumely. And yet it would not be difficult to show that to the movement of sentiment which arose with them is to be traced nearly every forward principle of these times. All that is best in our morality is found to have had its re-birth, if not its birth, among the generation which first invoked those great names of liberty, equality, fraternity. And, granting that there has been much foolish talk and much short-sighted rejoicing over the mere traffic in the words, apart from any substantial production of the things, it is still not at all clear that the dis-

missal of the whole as foolish is so eminently practical a proceeding as it claims to be. Take, for instance, the word happiness—a big name, surely, and one which by the general consent of the human race has never yet been married to permanent fact: I am not aware that any modern writer of the practical school compiles books to discredit happiness, though some authorities have certainly adjured us not to make happiness our end and aim. But judicial-minded gentlemen, who at other times profess to find life on the whole very tolerable, will take the trouble to look out a motto, in the original Greek, from the great pessimist Æschylus, by way of lending weight to their assault on a forecast of human happiness which analyses the matter into a few broad social conceptions.

Now this deprecatory exordium in a manner confesses that what I want to put to you is not any great triumph of equality thus far; and not even any possible attainment of equality, by political or other specific means, in the near future, but rather the doctrine that the principle of equality is a great ideal, and that the ultimate failure of humanity to realise it would practically mean the ultimate failure of civilisation—certainly the disappointment of the most important of the other practical aspirations for the future of mankind. And, in order to make this out, it will not be necessary to apply an extremely exalted standard to life, or to carry the notion of evolution to the highest points of imaginary perfection. A

very cursory survey of actual conditions will discover the extent of the evil; and a much improved state of things, will, I think, be found to be not so very Utopian or visionary.

The ordinary tone, it must be confessed, is against equality. One sees, to begin with, that many politicians who speak respectfully—and even, on given occasions, enthusiastically—of liberty, and who have nothing very distinct to say against fraternity, are quite positive that equality is pure delusion and nonsense. It is not merely the opponents of democracy who take this tone. One who cannot at all be so described, and a very different kind of writer from our judicial authority—the Austrian Dr. Max Nordau, whose book has been suppressed by the Austrian Government—is found declaring that

“Equality is a chimera of book-worms and visionaries, who have never studied nature and humanity with their own eyes. . . . Fraternity? Oh, this is a sublime word, the ideal goal of human progress, a presage of the condition of our race at the time when it attains to the summit of its fullest development, a time still very remote. But equality? That is a mere creature of the imagination, for which there is no room in any sensible discussion.”\*

This is damping; and yet I take leave to attempt the vindication of the tabooed principle.

After all, the terms fraternity and equality to a large extent cover the same ground; and it is not very clear how the fullest fraternity can be realised

\*‘The Conventional Lies of Civilisation,’ Eng. trans., pp. 117-8.



without such an attainment of equality as will carry us to our ideal. If you really feel that every man is your brother, how shall you rest content with leaving anyone to endure the disadvantages which befall him under his inferiority of gifts? How exclude any from your society as not being attractive company enough? But I am not seeking merely to balance definitions against one another. I want you to look at this as a practical question, and to take the ideas in their plain significance. Now, Dr. Nordau cannot have supposed that equality, as understood by its advocates, has the truly chimerical meaning of absolute sameness of faculty all round : he must have understood that it meant, in however wide a sense, equality of status—what our legal critic was thinking of when he said that equality before the law is difficult, but equality in society impossible. This then is the problem. Fraternity is commonly understood to be a spirit of general, undefined goodwill to our fellow creatures, and to stop short of the realisation of a life of anything like actual brotherhood : must we rest content with this? Whatever be the full bearing of the word fraternity, we know that in practice thus far it has signified something short of equality. The history of Christianity is a decisive proof. It has always been a Christian doctrine that believers are brethren in Christ, personal merits or gifts availing nothing for salvation. It is recorded, you may remember, of a distinguished Scotch clergyman, that when a lady of rank once

expressed to him her disturbance at the idea of meeting her tradesmen and other inferiors on equal terms in heaven, he promptly assured her that she need be under no apprehension on the subject, as she would never reach heaven while she remained in that frame of mind. And though you find Shakspeare, in 'King John', making Queen Constance talk of meeting her son in "the court of heaven", meaning the aristocratic or royal quarter, it is nevertheless certain that the Church has in all ages—however gross might be its sycophancy in practice, and however it might foster wars within Christendom—taught as matter of doctrine that Christians are one in Christ, and ought to love one another as brothers on that account even during this life. But who, save the special pleaders of the churches, will say that there has on the whole been any more practical fraternity or equality under Christianity during the ages of faith than under Paganism? It is possible, then, to hold fraternity in theory without at all approximating to equality or brotherhood in fact. If, therefore, we are to look at the matter to good purpose, and not merely to deal with abstractions, we must ask ourselves whether social equality is not both a profoundly desirable and a possible thing; and whether, on accepting the spirit of it, we may not adjust our whole daily lives to the bringing of it into manifold practice.

Some of you may be repelled at the outset by the surmise that any such thorough-going pre-

scription of equality must amount to the pure and simple advocacy of Socialism, as we have it in these days ; but the ideas are essentially distinct. How far the ultimate ideals would coincide is indeed a clearly contingent question ; but the preaching of equality seems to me to go on different lines from the ordinary preaching of Socialism. Socialism, as understood by all schools, is a matter of machinery for the lessening of economic evil, and I do not now direct your attention to economic evil at all. Nor am I prescribing political machinery. Practical as the matter is, it is chiefly on the side of feeling that I would like to present it.

The idea of equality has in these days already gone far enough to bring it about that when we consider the distinction habitually drawn a few centuries, or even a few generations ago, between persons of aristocratic descent and all others, we find it, in itself, entirely preposterous. The distinction came to have its quasi-religious importance and therefore its inherent absurdity, only when it had virtually ceased to have any basis in actual fact. Pedigree became more and more important, precisely as original endowment became less and less the decisive factor in men's status ; and it finally became an established superstition in a state of society in which such endowment, whether mental or physical, came to count as nearly for nothing as it ever conceivably can in a state of things at all progressive. All this we can



see clearly enough ; and we have as good as discarded the notion of giving a man any moral credit for his parentage—though in those social regions where empty conventions live longest, there is no doubt still a widespread cult of what is called “ birth ” or “ family.” But can we say there is now no element of purely arbitrary and prejudiced discrimination in the attitude of the majority of us towards those whom we describe as not being of our class? If we do not now—being so numerous, and consequently so hazy about our pedigrees—reason that so-and-so is our “ inferior ” because of the nature of his ancestry as compared with ours, can we say that we have got to the point of treating those about us either with strict reference to their real characters or capacities, or on terms of entirely equal status? I fear we are still a long way from such a consummation.

Let us take, by way of test, a certain number of the practical relations that subsist, temporarily or permanently, between ordinary people in this country—such as those of master or mistress and domestic servant, buyer and seller on a large scale, buyer and seller on a small scale, artist and artist’s customer, employer and workman or workwoman, shopkeeper and shop-assistant, passenger and cabman or railway servant, barrister or lawyer and clerk, landholder and architect. It is obvious on a moment’s thought that there are very wide differences of tone or spirit, in a general way, be-

tween people in some of these various positions—that, say, the same person as a rule will as it were change his mental pitch according as he enters into one or other of the relations I have mentioned. No one will deny, for instance, that the average middle-class man is likely to take a different tone towards the artist whom he asks to paint his portrait, from that which he takes towards his housemaid ; and that the average lady, similarly, has different modes of address for the counter-server in the shop and the doctor she consults about her health. In each case a service is commissioned, rendered, and paid for ; but how different are the various intellectual or spiritual relations ! It may at first sight seem as if the principle of variation were simply that of variation in culture—that tone or spirit of address is adjusted to the intellectual relation between the parties. But this is only a part of the truth, and it tends to hide the rest. The lady, for one thing, can have no knowledge as to the comparative culture of the shopman and the doctor : in any case she would distinguish between the dress-designer and the measurer-out of material, without thinking of the chances as to culture at all. Again, the difference of tone as between wholesale buyer and seller—that is, between principals—and between retail seller and buyer, is clearly not in the main a question of conscious estimate of culture on either side ; nor does the involuntary respect paid, say, to a great or famous physician, as compared

with an obscure one, rest on any notion that the famous man is likely to be the better educated. To take yet another case : an able actor will always receive more homage, both in public and in private, than one who may be much more cultured, but is yet a much worse actor. Where then are we to look for the principle of variation?

I propose to look for it first under the closest of the normal relations I have named—that of the master or mistress and the domestic servant. Here, undoubtedly, we have the most friction, the most strife, the most complaint, the most difficulty. The details are too notorious to need specifying : let us therefore take the pleadings on the two sides as heard, and try at once to sum up. Has the average master or mistress made out a clear case of hardship? It has always seemed to me, as a fairly disinterested onlooker, that whatever may be the faults of the average domestic, there is something in the whole conception of domestic service, as commonly prevailing among us, that puts the average employer philosophically in the wrong. Observe, certain impulses of self-assertion belong in the nature of things to all healthy organisms ; and practical morals and good manners may be said to consist in the orderly and considerate mutual adjustment of these tendencies, as among equals before the law, or equals in intercourse, respectively. But between house-ruler and house-servant there is always a presumption of a constant suppression of



the organic impulse on one side, and a constant parade of it on the other. This tendency is such that a master or mistress who may even be scrupulously—I will not say merely courteous, but, so to speak, *equal-minded* in dealings with tradespeople, will be found to retain the tone of superiority towards the servant at home. The domestic gives her services for her wages just as does the doctor or the artist, just as the gas company or the grocer supply their products ; but somehow it is assumed that she in particular should hold a tone of humility, as of one receiving unmerited favors. All the complaints about disrespect from servants imply this. Now it is significant that no such complaints are heard in regard to the relations, say, of clerks and their masters, or even those of shopmen and their employers, though here there is certainly plenty of tyranny. The reason is no doubt partly that the constant association within the household involves the constancy of a strain which, in the other cases, subsists only during working hours ; quarrels being thus more likely between mistress and servant than between master and assistant, just as they are unhappily more common between husband and wife than between business partners. But that is not all. There is undoubtedly a special exaction of respect from the home-servant — an exaction such as is not made outside ; and it is abundantly plain that this correlates with the general complaint against servants. There is accordingly

no comfort for those citizens who sigh for a return to the semi-feudal relations of the past in this matter. The more down-trodden sex has supplied, and doubtless will continue to supply, almost the whole of the class which thus, by the very nature of its function, most nearly reproduces the whole relation of master and slave ; but disability of sex and disability of class are alike on the slow but sure way to extinction ; and whoever is inclined to maintain them by conserving the old fashion of humility in household servitude, is, however unconsciously, obstructing right progress. You cannot have a general spread of education and of the social spirit without undermining inequality in its last stronghold—the last, because it lies nearest the centre of the social organism—the domestic circle.

But just as clear as the logical principle, unhappily, is the difficulty of the amendment it prescribes. Here and there one hears of people who try to treat their servants as moral equals, just as they would treat people of their own class, or relatives of their own, who were no better educated than their servants ; but it is not pretended that their path is an easy one. For the spirit of inequality, in its correlative forms, holds the field on both sides, and the “ inferior ”, so-called, will be found to shrink from the life of equality where the “ superior ” is willing to realise it. And this, of course, is the real sting of the evil, that in a society theoretically democratic, and therefore in

theory morally homogeneous, one class still crouches in spirit before another, even while its half-developed instincts of self-assertion are coming into play. If the harm and the pathos of this are not perceived, the aspiration for equality cannot be really sympathised with.

What, let us ask, turning from the single domestic issue to the broad question, what good moral cause is there for the obeisance of any one human being before any other? Surely the general answer of educated people will limit us to the simple recognition of moral or intellectual superiority. Putting aside certain corrupt survivals—as, the whole phenomena of royalism ; and certain official conventions—as, the deference paid to judges in court, there is no serious stickling in these days for any theory of class homage. In ordinary society there is no practical translation whatever of the sense of mental inequality into any display of humility. To feel respect there, is not to adopt the tone of humility as we see it in the bearing exacted from the servants. Why, then, should not a similar sense of a common humanity, or of social equivalence, rule over those relations in which there is hardly any greater range of mental disparity, but only a difference of relative function? You are always liable, whatever be your class, to the society of people whom you would not select as fitting intellectual companions ; but, they being of your own class, the tone of equality subsists. We can all maintain cordial and even lov-



ing relations with kinsfolk whose habits of mind are widely different from our own ; and when, as will sometimes happen, we have relatives who are not only uncultured but a trifle vulgar, we still grin and bear it. Why then is it impossible that the same tone, the same recognition of the infeasible rights of a personality as such, should enter into all relations between employer and employed, between rich and poor, between mistress and servant, between lady and shop-girl, between gentleman and waiter? The hindrance is not one of culture or of manners : we can get over such difficulties in the society of our own kindred. We must rather look for it in the immemorial tradition, the subtle heredity, of past human conditions, in which the collective life has only with infinite slowness been transformed from a cruel clash of brute force, and a mindless tyranny of naked strength, up through all degrees of class abjection, slavery, serfdom, and servitude, to the sophisticated medley of our present world. Mr. Ruskin, in a curious passage, finds a grotesquely materialistic cause for the gulf of inequality between the peasant poor and the landholding rich.

“The star group of the squills, garlic, and onions,” he says, “has always caused me great wonder. I cannot understand why its beauty and serviceableness should have been associated with the rank scent which has been really among the most powerful means of degrading peasant life, and separating it from that of the higher classes.”\*

\* ‘The Queen of the Air,’ 2nd ed., p. 98.

I fancy that we to-day, whatever may be our point of view as regards the design theory, are agreed that the secret of class alienation lies a little further inside the skull than the olfactory nerve.

Perhaps the point that most needs insisting on is the moral obligation on us all to be very patient and very scrupulous in this matter. True altruism means not merely a negative but also a positive attitude. It involves the bearing of burdens and the assumption of disagreeable functions. Not a few of us must have had a certain sense of chill a year or two ago in reading the reprint of a short newspaper essay written long before by George Eliot, in which the great novelist, after wittily representing the difficulties and trials of an attempt to teach servants to do the right thing intelligently and of their own will, comes to the conclusion that it is best not to appeal to their reason at all, but simply to give your orders and see that they are attended to. You do not attempt, said the essayist, to guide your child by appeals to his reason: that would be to make him a monster, without reverence, without affections; and just so it is with the average domestic. The logic of the analogy is not very clear, but here are the essayist's words of summing-up:

“Wise masters and mistresses will not argue with their servants, will not give them reasons, will not consult them. A mild yet firm authority, which rigorously demands that certain things be done without urging motives or entering into explanations. is both preferred by the servants themselves, and is the best means of educating them into any

improvement of their methods and habits. Authority and tradition are the chief, almost the only safe guides of the uninstructed—are the chief means of developing the crude mind, whether childish or adult.”

And so on. The note is disconcerting, coming from such a quarter. But I venture to say to you that not merely is the logic of that counsel unsound but the ethic of the whole is on the wrong line. How, let us ask ourselves, is the crude adult mind ever to rise above crudity if it is to be treated as a mere machine? Your child's mind will change of itself, and will begin one day to reason in spite of you: the servant's mind, in the terms of the case, is to be conserved in all its imperfections. Now, this is only the application to the domestic problem of the strong-man or autocrat theory of government; which proceeds on the assumption that the majority of people are incurably unwise, and therefore unfit to govern themselves; and that accordingly a strong despot is the proper thing for us. And some people call that doctrine practical. Well, we may be mostly unwise; but then our autocratic theorist shares in the inheritance. What is to be said of the practicality of a system which, finding unwisdom to begin with, goes about to deepen and perpetuate it? Take the case of the paternal autocracy of Cromwell, a ruler not only strong but in a measure enlightened and sagacious in his executive practice. What was the total effect of his assumption of all the functions of government? The reduction of the English nation from that state of moral vigor in



which it could wage the revolutionary war, to that in which it could of its own free will grovel before Charles the Second and place his foot on its neck. So true is it that men must work their own salvation, and that he who seeks to take in his hands the destiny of his fellows may be unknowingly a curse to them in the very degree of his capacity to overrule their wills, as he thinks, for their own good.

But the matter has wider bearings still. Once take your stand on the abstract principle of a benevolent despotism, and you will not stop with dictating to your servants, to say nothing of promoting unconstitutional government. See how our judicial authority applies the same principle to the first of all domestic relations, that of husband and wife. Where there is a real inequality to start with, he argues, you should recognise inequality of rights ; and he goes on to put the case of the necessity, in married life, of deciding on a great many questions in practice. On a thousand such questions, he says,

“The wisest and the most affectionate people might arrive at opposite conclusions. What is to be done in such a case? for something must be done. I say the wife ought to give way. She ought to obey her husband, and carry out the view at which he deliberately arrives, just as when the captain gives the word to cut away the masts, the lieutenant carries out his orders at once, though he may be a better seaman and may disapprove them. I also say that to regard this as a humiliation, as a wrong, as an evil in itself, is a mark not of spirit and courage, but of a base, unworthy, mutinous disposition—a disposition utterly subversive of all that is most worth hav-

ing in life. The tacit assumption involved in it is that it is a degradation ever to give up one's own will to the will of another, and to me this appears the root of all evil, the negation of that which renders any combined efforts possible."

Before we take up the moral issue, just let us note for a moment here how naïvely a legal mind can transcend its habit of logic when in the full glow of a prejudice. It is most pernicious, we are told, to insist on always having our own way ; *ergo*, in married life the man must always have his. It is base and unworthy to refuse ever to give in ; therefore a husband must never give in. Such harmonies are to be found in legal minds. But the logical question, however entertaining it may thus become, is only the shell of the matter. The question of the relations of personality between men and women in married life, I would here say, is one the essentials of which the legal mind is highly capable of missing : it takes us down to spiritual principles which even the idealistic mind—as we have seen in the case of George Eliot—cannot always be trusted to perceive. It is no idle paradox to say that the woman's question may just as truly be called the man's question : how truly, those can perhaps best understand who will take the trouble to trace the *tedium vitæ* and the other forces of dissolution in the societies of ancient Greece and Rome, with their very clearly defined relations between the sexes ; and then to analyse the elements of modern pessimism, whether of the every-day order or the philosophic.

But you who have been taught by Moncure Conway\* cannot be backward in the understanding of this matter; and in any case I would not presume to offer you a body of doctrine on such a topic. I will just say, as regarding our theme of equality, that to make conjugal co-operation a matter of the giving and taking of orders, in which the one side is to sacrifice its wishes always and the other side never, is just to reduce the whole relation to the lowest moral basis on which it can possibly stand. No two people can live such a life without deteriorating or at best stagnating: they are off the line of moral evolution. And if you can see this, you will see that just the same kind of deterioration—though doubtless in a less degree—is involved in all habitual relations of entirely arbitrary command and spiritless obedience. Let us not shrink from asserting this, in face of those practical exigencies which seem most absolutely to exclude our principle. The fact, so much harped on, that there can be no equality, in any sense, in an army, is simply one more argument against armies. It is indeed a most encouraging thought that the progress of real democratic feeling, in such a society as that of modern Europe, tends to eliminate war, not only by making men averse to mutual slaughter, but by making them progressively unfit for the mechanical submission that the military life implies. It is not that will-

\* Said on the platform of South Place Institute.



ing obedience or willing compromise is repulsive to a healthy mind. Justice Stephen is quite right so far. It is that a constant attitude of unquestioning submission, with the very idea of independent judgment excluded, is perceptibly degrading to anyone capable of such judgment—degrading, that is, at the very best, inasmuch as it stunts the whole growth of the intelligence which resignedly submits to it. And just as education and other good things become diffused among us, there must assuredly take place a transformation of the old system of mere drill and discipline in all the organisations in which many men work together. You will not have anarchy ; but you will have elasticity, else your political progress halts on one foot. You cannot have the ideal of an army permanently imposed on the civic machinery of an evolving society.

To see the spiritual gain involved in equality, we have but to turn to the society of the United States and note the differences between it and our own. For those of us who have not seen it with our eyes there is a vivid and valuable species of report in the whole body of American fiction, in so far as it deals with home life, and is not concerned to sketch the life of Europe. Here, and similarly in the American plays, the tone of equality strikes one constantly, and, I think, always pleasantly. That tone of mutual recognition which we catch in cases where with us the relation is merely servile—how taking it is, how suggestive of cheerfulness

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and a forward motion of things. There, too, there is a servant problem, but how much nearer they seem to a democratic solution than we! It is difficult to say where the attraction precisely lies, but somehow there seems to be a gain of moral sunshine in respect of the sum total of those forms of class life which are there independent and self-respecting, while here they strike the note of subjection and humility. When you read in Mr. Howells of a lumberman, whose life is one of wandering and toil, but who, being given to random reading, will talk familiarly with an educated man about "old Arnold" and "old Spencer" and "old Huxley"; who, as the novelist says, is through life buoyed up by a few wildly interpreted maxims of Emerson, and retains always the same tone of "gross and ridiculous optimism" — this picture has its comic side, but has it not also one full of brightness and healthy significance? It seems to me that all that element of self-confidence and equal-mindedness which we note in all grades of American life as compared with our own, whatever drawbacks it may carry in the way of ignorant conceit, is so much substitution of social light for social gloom. There may be other evils, but this surely is a gain. Sir James Stephen, on whom we can always place entire reliance as devil's advocate in these matters, observes that it is to be questioned

"whether the enormous development of equality in America, the rapid production of an immense multitude of

commonplace, self-satisfied, and essentially slight people, is an exploit which the whole world need fall down and worship”.

But our genial jurist is again misconceiving the problem. It is not the production of self-satisfied, commonplace people that is the alleged gain—we in England, by the way, may compete with confidence in these matters—but the production of these self-satisfied multitudes where other countries, such as our own, produce legions that can never attain material self-satisfaction, or do so only on the sorriest pretexts. In short, America manufactures happiness where we produce abjection and poverty of soul; and about the expediency of producing these last there is no question at all. As for the alleged “slightness” of the people who grow up under the *régime* of equality—well, we are all rather poor creatures at best; and in any case it is not at all clear that the special products of inequality among us, whether upper-class or lower, have even the saving grace of solidity. As for the moral aspect of the matter, it is extremely hard to see where our advantage lies. What are we to infer of the social condition of a country where there is a “British Ladies’ Female Emigration Society”—where the “ladies” subscribe to send the “females” abroad? I find that it is still a perfectly common thing, both in Presbyterian Scotland and in Episcopalian England, for clergymen to hold separate Bible or confirmation-classes for “young



ladies" and "young women", this sort of thing surviving under the very auspices of fraternal Christianity.

Do not suppose, from any of these trifling data, that this is after all only a small question of manners and passing conventions. The future of every nation is bound up in the resolution it takes as to this problem. Indeed, we might say that only those States which come to the sound conclusion will have any long national future at all. The human struggle for survival, in the time to come, is going to mean a competition in all kinds of fitness to live; and my burden to-day is that the sense of personal equality is one of the plainest conditions of satisfactory life. And round this centre will group themselves many contests of ideas—the contests on behalf of the freedom of women, of children, of the workers, of the lower races, of the masses of the higher races. You will find that a general connection runs through the forms of opinion on these matters; and you will find further, what is very significant, that backward-pointing opinion on more abstract questions tends to join itself to reactionary opinion on these several topics. It is worth noting that Carlyle, in his latter years the strenuous theocratic prophet of despotism, and the foe of all schemes of advancement, was of opinion in his younger days, when he was something of a rationalist, and believed in national education, that conquering heroes were a class of people the world could do very well with-

out.\* In those days, and perhaps later, he taught that "the true Shekinah is man". But what has become of the Shekinah in the later doctrine of political subjection and the vileness of mankind? Let us take up his discarded creed: man is the highest thing we know, and to view him as such is to deplore every form of human degradation, every stain of indignity on a human personality, which reason and experience tell us we might efface. Where Carlyle, with his anti-fraternal view of things, grew out of his dislike of despotism into a boundless devotion to it, Voltaire, with his ever-deepening human sympathies, grew out of his early liking for absolutism† into a ripe conviction that that had been a mistaken reading of the book of history.

*Apropos* of Carlyle's anti-humanism, there has been broached, in passionate contradiction of him, a doctrine which seems to carry the idea of equality to its furthest spiritual bounds—the doctrine laid down, namely, by the late Mr. Henry James, senior, in his remarkable paper on Carlyle,‡ that just as economic science prescribes for Europe the utilisation of its enormous volume of waste matter, so immensely valuable, as a means to the physical regeneration of its soil, so the moral regeneration of the race demands the absorption into its life of all its outcasts, the care of whom

\* 'Essay on Burns,' People's Ed., p. 6.

† See the Extracts in Buckle, 3-vol. ed., ii, 295.

‡ In the *Atlantic Monthly* for May, 1881.

will mean its moral salvation. From my standpoint, I cannot accept the principle so put, but it seems to me to point to a truth. The absorption of any element of weakness or blemish into the general life cannot well fail to mean the presence of that weakness in the new combination; but it remains true that until society seeks to raise its pariahs, the whole upshot of human life will prove a sad subject for reflection. And while we shall do well to allow largely for those forces of destruction and disease which belong to moral affairs as to all others, we shall find that that instinct of self-preservation which underlies all life is curiously tenacious of existence even in the sphere of what we may call morbid morals. When, a year or two ago, I gave some time to the investigation of slum life in a large town, hardly anything—not even the grime and the ignominy—impressed me more than the extent to which moral gradations were recognised among those ill-starred multitudes. Scandal was as rife among them as in the best society. The woman who was a drunkard and a pilferer, and worse, looked down from a certain moral elevation on her neighbour who had lost all of her nine children and was suspected of having shortened their lives by her violence. Where all true decency was dead, there was still a strenuously-drawn line between ill-fame that was notorious and that which was only a matter of tacit recognition. A block peopled by known ex-convicts was let at distinctly lower rents than the



average ; though the standard of cleanliness and order was found to be higher. Reviewing it all, I remembered that all successful criminal management had proceeded on the plan of appealing to the germs of self-respect and good feeling in the subject ; and I could not but recognise that here, under the most pitiless and most decisive of all the caste divisions of society, the spirit of individual self-assertion, which is the stuff of spiritual equality, had a strange vitality, carrying even a certain dark promise of better things to come.

I would not, however, be thought to stake the whole gospel of equality on a moral scheme which amounts to an inculcation of the most advanced fraternity ; rather I contend that the ideal of equality is the more practical of the two, being already visibly well on the way to realisation in some parts of the world. You may have the spirit of equality even in strife, and the times of strife are still with us. And while I disclaim the office of prescribing machinery, I venture to think that the lines of the progress to be made are not hard to see. Whatsoever you do in the spirit of respect for the personalities of all with whom you come into contact, and in prevention of any humiliation of a fellow creature, that makes for equality, and so for happiness. And this spirit excludes all inequality of tone and temper ; beginning with the home circle and abolishing that primeval subjection of the woman-child to the man-child—the sister to the brother—which so strangely survives

to-day in so many English households ; proceeding at the same time to give the wife equality with her husband, and therefore companionship with her sons, as our neighbours across the Channel have contrived to do with all their miscarriages ; going on through the more remote relations of life to the political and the international, till we are really a self-governing people within our bounds, and shall not only do justly by all other peoples, strong or weak, great or low, but shall have become incapable of the arrogance of imputing special follies and vices to other nations, in the fashion which even our judicial minds affect, as if we had no follies and vices of our own. In the immediate field of practical politics the bearing of the principle is plain enough. Instead of wondering how the nation is to get on without an all-powerful political leader, is it not time that, while fully recognising the still obvious need for organisation, parties should begin to think of acting by intelligent accord, giving to no man the keeping of the consciences of their fellows ? An American poet has of late years given to his countrymen the boldest counsel that can well be given by a thinking man : " Resist much, obey little " ; and extreme as that may sound, it will be found, I think, to be more truly practical and more philosophic at bottom than the contrary doctrine of our legal guide, who teaches that the fifth commandment was a better precept for a nation's life than any maxim of democracy. As to this, let that nation

now speak which claims first to have received the fifth commandment. The spirit of man to-day is fain to think it has got hold of higher and deeper moral laws than that, and in the new faith sets up for itself a new ideal—the cultus of the future as against the cultus of the past. Its promised land is to be watered with no human blood, though it is even harder to reach than the old, and may for many a day and generation seem to recede as we strain towards it: it is truly a land that is very far off. But the way thither is not through the desert; rather it lies through “orient lands of hope”, which already yield a foretaste of the fruits and flowers of the realm beyond.



# EMOTION IN HISTORY.

## A GLANCE INTO THE SPRINGS OF PROGRESS.

A LECTURE.

(1886.)

THE great questions which divide philosophers, it has been truly said, are not, as common-sense people are apt to suppose, mere artificial disputes engendered by rival systems, but are rather, in the main, extensions into abstract and technical terms of differences which spring up among every-day thinkers, on every-day occasions, and which, to say truth, are as a rule discussed on such occasions with no more and no less decisive result than attends most philosophic encounters. A few prominent issues will sufficiently illustrate the point. The problem of the existence of "a God" remains the last, as it is one of the first, that forces itself on the human mind in any stage of its development. Our most encyclopædic philosopher, Mr. Spencer, after reviewing all the phases of thought known to him, from the highest to the lowest, decides that where primeval man began by surmising a power or powers behind the actual things around; and where the ordinary man to-day unhesitatingly accepts the doctrine of the existence of such a power, the most philosophic mind of all will admit the existence of an infinite mystery,

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never to be solved, but, nevertheless, always to be faced and never to be ignored, by the man of the future. And so with the problem of free will. The philosophers carry that to further lengths, and into subtler analyses, than do the common-sense people who discuss in simple language, and short sentences, the question whether a certain man's bad actions are to be blamed as deliberately wrong, as breaches of a known moral law, or are to be palliated as the results of inherited character, of bad education, and of untoward circumstances.

And just so it is with the vexed question I have pointed at in the title of this discourse. Nothing is more common in ordinary talk than an inquiry as to whether such a one is lacking in qualities of the heart or of the head ; and whether, that being ascertained, the inferior heart or the inferior head does the more harm, or is the more to be objected to. Probably the more frequent verdict is that the person whose " heart is in the right place ", as the phrase goes, is a more estimable character than the other whose heart is not all that could be desired, even if that other does less real harm in the world. Good people naturally tend to appeal to what they call good feeling, and have a leaning to the motto " love is lord of all ". Yet it happens every now and then that one of these good people is acutely impressed by the truth that " evil is wrought by want of thought as well as want of heart ", and then we find them almost inclined to

think that want of thought is the true name for that want of consideration for others which they had termed want of heart.

A great novelist, deeply convinced of the close connection between self-criticism and right action, has illustrated her view in her fictions, with such results that many people are brought to take perhaps a severer view of the conduct of such a character as Arthur Donnithorne in 'Adam Bede', not at all what we call a heartless type, than of such a character as Rosamond Vincy in 'Middlemarch', to whom the word applies with admitted accuracy. Well, this difference of view as to the nature and relative importance of the springs of conduct is substantially reproduced in the disagreements of great thinkers, under whose formulas whole schools range themselves. In the philosophy of history we find it strenuously disputed whether it is feeling or idea, knowledge or sentiment, emotion or reason, that impels or controls the progress of society, and it must be confessed that the philosophers are about as capable as the rest of us of changing their point of view, and even of holding the two views alternately or indiscriminately. This point is, in fact, the crux of the philosophy of history, so far as that has any general practical interest. But I do not propose either to impeach or to invoke the authority of any of the great names of philosophy in this purely practical enquiry. It is a less presumptuous and a more hopeful course to try to look into the ques-



tion in those phases in which it naturally presents itself in actual life, than to undertake to set the philosophers right all round ; and if we still go astray, at least we shall have fatigued ourselves a little the less in the process.

Let us see, as plainly as may be, what our problem is. It is, Whether the ruling force in historic progress, practically speaking, is opinion, as fixed by processes of reasoning, or the, so-to-speak, elemental influence of the affections—in the sense of sympathies and aversions, desires and loves and hates. Are great historic changes the result of ideas deduced from earlier ideas ; or are they rather the outcome of, as it were, spontaneous tides of feeling, which the ideas serve only to justify and express? Are political crises, as Mr. Spencer puts it, the effects of “moral antagonisms” ; or are they produced by conflicting theories and convictions? Let us, instead of lingering at the outset over our words, and striving for definitions, put our case in terms of known historical events, and see if we can grasp its elements in that form.

Any period will serve us. Take first the instance of the rise and consummation of the antagonism to slavery in the United States, as being a historical episode to which we are near enough in sympathy and in acquaintance with details, and from which we are yet far enough removed to view it as a whole and in true perspective. Was that important occurrence the outcome of a de-

monstration of the illegitimacy of slavery in a democratic country, or of its demoralising effect on all concerned ; or was it rather the expression of an uprising of humane emotion—of sheer brotherly love? Were people persuaded and convinced that slavery was wrong ; or did they set out by a spontaneous aversion to it? There is plenty to be said on both sides. It would hardly do, on the one hand, to say that the abolitionists were all good reasoners, and their opponents the reverse, or, on the other hand, that only inhumane people upheld or tolerated the institution. The various cases of Channing, of Lincoln, and of Hawthorne, should give us pause on that head. Again, we can see that there was nothing new in the arguments against slavery ; and they were certainly very simple. Why was it that at first every pulpit in the United States was in favor of the slave-owners, all justifying slavery by passages in the Bible ; while ultimately, in the North at least, the clerical attitude almost entirely changed? Had the ministers simply come to see that they had misunderstood the Bible? Both sides had appealed to the Bible : did the Bible settle it? It seems hardly possible to decide that it did ; but if we do not so decide, neither can we with confidence say that people's minds were changed by reasoning ; for the only process of reasoning traceable in many cases seems to have consisted in showing that cruelty was being inflicted, and appealing to a dislike of cruelty assumed to exist in the general

mind ; which is something like saying that it was an emotion that did the work.

Take next the case of the French Revolution, variously described as the outcome of an emotional contagion and of certain political teachings. One has only to look into these matters in a dispassionate spirit to begin to suspect that the difficulty dealt with is one we ourselves have created in making the distinction with which we set out. What is it, we find ourselves asking—what is it that distinguishes emotional action from reasoned action? Rousseau, we are told, appealed to men's emotions. But how did he do it? Did he not do it by laying down certain propositions of an intellectual nature, such as that all men were born free, and that inequality was the great source of misery? To say such things is to state ideas, to argue, to appeal to a certain sense of logical sequence, limited it is true, but still recognisable as an intellectual function, in the ordinary sense of the term. So that, to come to the point, we begin to perceive a state of emotion to be a natural sequence or concomitant, in certain cases, of a mental process ; and, what is still more to the purpose, we begin to perceive that the emotion cannot very well be called into play except through some appeal to the judgment.

There is, perhaps, an equal chance that this kind of analysis may seem on the one hand a needless dissection, and on the other a too facile dismissal of a problem that is very real for many.



For, remember, this distinction between reason and emotion, this treatment of them as two independent influences, so to speak, is one of the commonest theories of human nature, being implied alike in our private discussions, in our public propaganda, and in the distinct teachings of rival philosophies. Hear this utterance of Bentham in his young days,\* in regard to the jurist Blackstone: "For indeed such an ungenerous antipathy [*i.e.*, Blackstone's antipathy to political and legal reform] seemed of itself enough to promise a general vein of obscure and crooked reasoning, from whence no clear and sterling knowledge could be derived; so intimate is the connection between some of the gifts of the understanding, and some of the affections of the heart." Here is the father of utilitarianism himself, whom Carlyle has denounced as a mere logic-mill, devoid of living emotion, actually urging that a certain human-kindness, or enthusiasm for the general good, is the necessary condition not only of helpful action, but even of right reasoning and accurate perception.

Bentham is indeed only one of many cases of character which, when we look into them, strongly suggest the fallibility of those processes by which we infer a man to have been warm-hearted or the reverse. When the 'Life and Letters of Macaulay' appeared there was a sincere surprise over the revelation that the man who had been gener-

\* See his 'Fragment on Government', 1776.

ally regarded as a brilliant partisan writer, almost devoid of the deeper emotions, and by not a few as a sort of hard-mouthed sophist, utterly lacking in sweetness and light, was in private life full of the tenderest family devotion, so deeply attached to his sisters that he never seemed to want to marry, and a very fountain of affection and goodness to them and theirs his whole life long. So deeply rooted, indeed, had become the notion that Macaulay was a mere intellectual phenomenon, that the writer of one sketch of him\* has declared he "was a born *citadin*, and cared for nature hardly at all", though Macaulay has told how once piece of scenery in the Neilgherries moved him almost to tears;† the inaccuracy being no doubt the result of the preconceived opinion. History and biography are full of these apparent paradoxes. When, some fifty years ago, it was proposed to run the projected railway to Brighton through a piece of lovely scenery which would be destroyed by the construction, who among English literary men was it that alone publicly protested and appealed against the scheme? John Stuart Mill, the utilitarian, supposed by many of his discerning contemporaries to advocate the constant subordination of the beautiful to the vulgarly useful, and to reduce all life to a sordid balancing of material gains and losses. The world

\* J. Cotter Morison, 'Macaulay,' p. 113.

† Trevelyan's 'Life', ch. vi.

truly plays fantastic tricks in its general judgments—those crystallisations of the “harebrained chatter of irresponsible frivolity” into dicta which pass as indisputable universal truth.

It is the art of prudence, then—to put it no more forcibly—to look with doubt on the conventional separation between the emotional and the rational in character; and, by consequence, to doubt the independence of the two influences in historic action. There is scarcely an argument in the case for either that cannot be, and is not, turned against itself. Buckle teaches us—in a work † which no real student of history can look on without respect, and which has, I venture to say, much more real stamina of sound induction in it than some recent ready-writers give it credit for—that powerful thinker reasons, on a survey of the movement of modern civilisation, that moral progress, so far as there is any, is purely and simply a result of increasing knowledge of the laws of nature, the increasing thoughtfulness which such knowledge brings giving rise directly to moderation of primitive passion and clearer perception of the claims of others, and indirectly furthering the same ends by promoting the arts. The main principles of international and private morality, says Buckle, were as well known and as commonly enunciated two thousand years ago as now. That wars of

† ‘Introduction to the History of Civilisation in England,’ ch. iv.



aggression are wrong, that we should do as we would be done by — these were moral common-places then as now : the difference is that in the interval a whole world of intellectual and material influences has come into play, and we have become in that way different creatures. Buckle indeed does say that morality is really unprogressive, that the proportion between well-meaning people and ill-meaning people remains much the same, and that the social change consists in our fuller knowledge preventing us from committing such atrocities as burning heretics, and so forth. And, armed with testimony as he usually is, the historian can cite three respectable names on his side — Mackintosh, who said that “ morality makes no discoveries ” ; Condorcet, who declared that “ the morality of all nations has been the same ” ; and Kant, who laid it down that “ in moral philosophy we have got no further than the ancients ”.

But just here come in the advocates of the emotional view, who say : “ Quite so. The ancients knew the logic of morality as well as the moderns ; but they lacked the sympathy, the emotion for justice, the passion for others’ well-being, which makes modern life superior.” On this, to be quite frank, one has some misgivings. Is our international morality, one asks, so much better than that of the ancients? When we contemplate the policy of Cæsar and Alexander we seem at first to be in a different moral environment ; but when we recall our own exploits in India, Africa, America,

in Afghanistan, in Zululand, in Egypt, and in Burmah, the difference does not appear quite so clear. The truth is that our ethics, while they have improved within the limits of the nation, are almost purely barbarous as concerns our relations with uncivilised States, that is to say, with those States which we can oppress with impunity. It is indeed to be hoped—otherwise our morality has a rather dreary outlook—that the practice of international burglary will ere long be universally discredited, and that national exultation over a battue campaign against ill-armed savages will become as impossible in Europe as a revival of the gladiatorial shows of Rome ;\* but that we *are* still barbarians in that regard is proved year after year by brutalising pictures of scenes of carnage in our illustrated Press.

Still, let us acknowledge that we are improving at home. If we make war on Egypt and annex Burmah, shooting as rebels those who defend their country as against us, at least we put down prize-fighting in England. It is hardly possible not to speak satirically of these things, and yet, grotesque as the contrasts are, the fact is indisputable that the moral sense is developing among us. And if we compare the inner life of ancient Rome with our own we may take heart and hope. Those atrocious women of the Empire, who could take

\* This was written in 1886. We have had since the national exultation over the battue campaign against the Soudanese, and the infamous war in South Africa.

satisfaction in having slaves flogged to death in their presence, and who could clamorously insist that the vanquished gladiator should be stabbed to the heart by his comrade antagonist—these women, and the women of Juvenal, are not to be matched, happily, among the mothers of our time. And when we think of the mere diabolism of the morals of such beings—nay, when we think of the normal and universal insensibility to scenes of outrage not only among the ancients but in the middle ages, it does seem as if what was wanting to our forefathers was really, as the emotionalists say, the power of feeling, the simple elemental sense of compassion and fellow-creatureship which Mahomet, in a moment of emotion, declared to be one of the best gifts of Allah to men. And yet even here we shall find, I think, if we study it out, that the emotional explanation is not the final one.

Let us carry ourselves in imagination to a famous and impressive scene in medieval history, that of the abdication of his imperial functions by Charles the Fifth at Brussels in 1555, in favor of his son Philip—the scene which is so vividly reproduced for us by Mr. Motley.\* The old Emperor, we are told in the dispatch of the English envoy, who was present, “begged the forgiveness of his subjects if he had ever unwittingly omitted the performance of any of his duties towards them. And here he broke into a weeping,

\* ‘Rise of the Dutch Republic,’ Pt. I, ch. i.



whereunto, besides the dolefulness of the matter, I think, he was moche provoked by seeing the whole company to do the lyke before ; there beyng in myne opinion not one man in the whole assemble, stranger or another, that dewring the time of a good piece of his oration poured not out as abundantly teares, some more, some lesse. And yet he prayed them to bear with his imperfections, proceeding of his sickly age, and of the mentioning of so tender a matter as the departing from such a sort of dere and loving subjects." And there is abundant further testimony to the same effect. "And yet," asks Mr. Motley, half in amazement, half in indignation, "what was the Emperor Charles to the inhabitants of the Netherlands that they should weep for him? His conduct towards them during his whole career had been one of unmitigated oppression. . . . The interests of the Netherlands had never been even a secondary consideration with their master. He had fulfilled no duty towards them. He had regarded them merely as a treasury upon which to draw ; while the sums which he extorted were spent upon ceaseless and senseless wars, which were of no more interest to them than if they had been waged in another planet." He had cut down their liberties ; he had inflicted bloody and crushing penalties on the city of Ghent for simply asserting its ancient rights to self-taxation. All undeniably true, and yet who doubts that the display of emotion both by the cruel old king and the

people of the Netherlands was, as Mr. Motley tells us, perfectly sincere?

That was genuine emotion, assuredly ; and such facile emotion, impossible now to us, was possible in those days to men and women whom in other respects we perceive to have been barbarously callous. Excessive sympathetic emotion is not only not incompatible with a comparatively primitive development of moral sensibility, but actually correlates naturally with that. And if we go back to the case of the Romans, with their very women capable of gross cruelty, we shall on impartial reconsideration find that we are in presence not of mere sterility of emotional quality, but rather of a monstrous and deadly overgrowth of the emotional nature, a frightful perversion of it, fatal to the subject as well as the victims, a sure portent of the ruin of the society in which it was possible. Look at the matter rightly and you will see that these ferocious appetites were of the very stuff of emotion, were really the expression of a profound craving for excitement, bred in a brutal and corrupt society, and not to be allayed by any save brutal methods. Where the idle English woman of fashion, with her gentle nurture and her delicate nerves, seeks her emotional nutriment in society, in gaiety, in spectacle, in the levée, at the race-course, at the theatre, in the novel, and in the fashionable church, the patrician woman of imperial Rome, with her more animal nature, her profounder *ennui*, and her wilder unrest, craved a

far fiercer thrill, a tigerish joy. And as with the woman, so with the man ; for, indeed, what is it but a spontaneous emotion that makes us more aghast at cruelty in the Roman woman than in the Roman man?

Take the whole question into the dispassionate arena of anthropological science, and it becomes still clearer. What is it that makes the main psychological difference between the average savage and the average civilised man? Not a relative subordination of emotion in the savage, not a preponderance of it in the ordinary European. The savage is clearly far more a creature of feeling, in the wide sense of the word, than the civilised white. His primary feelings are much more violent when they come into play. His curiosity is a wild excitement, his rage is a frenzy, his devotion is a passion, his fear is a paralysis ; and when we sum up the states of mind which make up an ordinary year of his life we find they consist far more of pure emotion—that is of mere sensation of appetite, of desire, of hatred, of curiosity, of general physical excitement, and of fear—far more of these than of reflection or reasoning ; and this not only absolutely, but relatively to the life of the civilised white. The lower savages are unreflecting and devoid of foresight in an extreme degree. It is told of the Caribs\* that they will sell their hammocks for less in the morning than in the

\* By Labat, writing in 1724. See Waitz, 'Introduction to Anthropology,' Eng. trans., p. 295.



evening, so incapable are they of realising for twelve hours in advance their inevitable future. And like those higher barbarians whom Mr. Wallace has described so attractively,† they are at the same time capable of passing from a state of good humor to one of murderous fury in a few minutes, just as two encountering dogs may at the mere sight of each other pass from a normal state of temper into one of destructive rage. These, then, are the out-and-out creatures of emotion; the organisms in which feeling most absolutely determines conduct; and they can scarcely be called a moral success.

Consider, now, in the light of our examples, what an emotion practically is. It is, as the term etymologically implies, an outflow of feeling, a moving of the nervous being; and this kind of nervous excitation, in one sort or another, may exist either in company of a primitive appetite or passion or an irrational belief, or in company with a high principle, or a wide sympathy, or a selfish desire, or a base purpose. It is, so to speak, the striking of the clock — the clock being the mechanism of the mind, in which every moment's condition is the outcome of one that went before; and if for the sake of the metaphor you will consider the different hours on the dial to represent different perceptions, from the animal desires up to the joy of self-denial and the enthusiasm of

† 'Malay Archipelago,' vol. ii, pp. 443, 460.

humanity ; and if you will further regard the clock hands as the percipient intelligence—the intellectual and the physical consciousness—then the figure becomes not inapt. The human personality is a striking clock ; and neither does the striking move the hands, nor the mere motion of the hands cause the striking ; but both alike are the results of the obscure mechanism within—the hands moving and pointing noiselessly, and the bell doing its part in salient sound. And in the well-ordered clock you cannot have the one without the other. If the machine strikes at random, or always before the hour, you say it has gone wrong : your clock that does nothing but strike is the analogue of the madman ; while your clock which does not strike for the higher sympathies, but marks only egoisms and appetites, is in another way an undesirable instrument.

But, to pass from the metaphor, the important truth for us all is this, that not only are ideas and emotions not antagonistic aspects of consciousness, but they are positively inconceivable apart. There is positively no perception whatever, whether physical or intellectual, whether abstract or concrete, that does not involve an emotion, in its due degree, as surely as an object placed in light casts its shadow. You might smile if I named some of the conditions of mind which, on this principle, are to be conceived of as involving emotion, like every other, on their own small scale ; but it is not perfectly clear that every sen-

sation of physical pleasure and physical pain, to begin with, has an aspect correlative with those higher spiritual exaltations which we best remember; that the gratification of curiosity, the memory of a bereavement, the solution of a mathematical problem, the perception of skill in a work of art, or beauty or ugliness in an object, the appreciation of truth in a thought or nobleness in an action—is it not clear that all these are cases in which a simple state of consciousness, of thought or of simple sense, swells into the suffused sensation which we name emotion, and cannot even be recognised save as the emotion supervenes?

And if this be found invariably true of the higher forms of ideation—if this passage from perceiving to feeling be there a simple matter of course, then it follows that just such a passage from perceiving to feeling takes place in every process of sane consciousness whatever, from the most trivial intellectual operation to the highest and profoundest. You have it in the trifling case of your hardly perceptible satisfaction when you get your change right after making purchases in a shop, and you have it in its fitting degree in the swelling of the heart of Franklin when he found he had drawn lightning from the cloud, of Archimedes when he had solved his problem, of Thackeray when he felt he had accomplished a stroke of genius in his novel;\* and you have not merely

\* When some one praised the passage in 'Vanity Fair' in which Rebecca admires her husband as he strikes down



noble emotional poetry but the strictest scientific truth in the lyrical cry of Keats over his first reading of Chapman's Homer :

“ Then felt I like some watcher of the skies  
 When a new planet swims into his ken ;  
 Or like stout Cortez, when with eagle eyes  
 He stared on the Pacific, and all his men  
 Looked at each other, with a wild surmise,  
 Silent, upon a peak of Darien.”

Be sure there is no process of reasoning which fails of its throb of emotion in the exact degree of its depth and clearness ; no altitudes of the intellect where the fires of feeling do not glow ; and if it should ever seem to you that that white light of truth which men say shines on the loftier heights is a cold radiance, bethink you whether you might not there at times find healing from the scorchings of the fires of passion and of suffering which you chance upon below, or rest and soothing from the changing heats and chills of the region of social warfare and aspiration. However that may be for each one of us, there the great law remains, that the thrill of the astronomer over the new truth he has wrested from the vast book of the heavens is but a higher phase of the play of cerebral intelligence than the wonder of the earliest man over the strangely-shaped stone in which he divines a deity ; and that when, in contemplating the infinite mystery of things, we are shaken “ with

the Marquis, Thackeray admitted that on writing the description he threw down his pen, exclaiming it was a stroke of genius.

thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls", we are still paralleling the simplest instance in which the awakening of an idea or perception in our consciousness flows into something which, while we cannot dissociate it from the thought, we call an emotion.

And now it may be asked, what is the practical lesson to be drawn from this law of human nature. It is, I think, not obscure, and not unimportant. What we have seen is that while the emotions of the lower man are few, violent and preponderating, being little modified by reflection, those of the higher man are many, are more subtle, are really more extensive than the savage's—seeing that the latter has very many hours of mere lethargy—and are above all balanced and guided by the cultivated reason. The difference between a good clerk and a bad clerk, said a shrewd man of business once to me, is simply that the good clerk does everything twice; and this thinking twice is, broadly speaking, the secret of improvement in conduct. Or, to put it otherwise, what we want is not the divorce of emotion from action, that being indeed a contradiction in terms, but the securing that the force of emotion shall accrue to the best ideas and desires rather than to the worst, so that the balance of action shall be beneficent. And this is the practical truth contained in the teaching of Buckle, that as the multiplication of higher ideas and desires means widened knowledge, it is

the widening knowledge of mankind that determines their course—moral progress being impossible without intellectual ; or, as we may say, to go back to our homely figure, the clock cannot go on striking the hours when the hands are not moving.

Remember, all the effective emotion of the past related itself to ideas, and what you want is that new ideas shall be substituted for these, thus bringing about a new direction of that motor force which we call emotion. It was strictly an exaggeration to say that our savage, or even our dog, represented emotion pure and simple : there too the emotion, be it of love or hatred or desire, flows from a definite perception in sense or in memory. The nearest approach to a contagion of pure emotion is that of a dancing mania such as we read of in history and occasionally in the newspapers ; or an epidemic of hysteria ; and such phenomena are really forms of disease. Normal emotion belongs to an idea. Affect the perception, the idea, alter or modify or supersede that, and the emotion will take care of itself as surely as your shadow. The emotion of patriotism which hurled the people of Greece triumphantly against the invading hosts of Persia was a stress of feeling round a few vivid memories and forecasts ; and that emotion has affected all subsequent European civilisation mainly for the better. The excitement of medieval Christendom for the Crusades was just another



outburst of feeling upon one or two simple intellectual conceptions ; and these conceptions happening to be false and foolish, and the emotion for them happening to be so violent and so unhappily fostered, the net result was a mere tempest of destruction and misery, leaving no discernible balance of good, and involving lasting harm in the barbarising of European modes of thought, and the direct arrest of nobler tendencies.

Our formula, it may be said, does not go far, but at least it is of universal validity. And it clears the way for others. Applying it to the rise of Christianity, we say that the Christian movement began in the acceptance of a definite idea—the idea of an incarnation of deity ; and that if, in some countries, the new religion became more emotional than those before it, it was exactly in so far as the dazzling idea of a sacrifice by divinity on behalf of humanity—new to them though familiar to other races—generated a new outbreak of emotion. But this emotion, mark, could soon co-exist or alternate with the emotions of hate, whether religious or secular ; hate to the enemies of the new deity, or to heretic companions, coming in as soon as the first trance of the new idea was over. And we say that if that idea was intellectually unsound, it cannot conceivably be permanent ; that the emotion for it cannot save it from the advance of truer ideas ; and that to abandon it for the truer ideas is not at all to make an end of religious emotion as such but to give it

a new and better bias. Nay, so absolute is the union of emotion and intelligence that we tend to go astray even in speaking thus ; for the very desire to substitute the true for the false is in itself an emotion ; so that it is by an impulse of feeling as fundamental as our appetites that we turn from the incredible doctrine to the credible ; and the passion of the sceptic for truth is as essentially an emotion as the yearning of the believer for spiritual rest.

All this seems rather a truism than a truth when we think it over ; and yet how far are we from putting the truth in practice ! See what it involves. It implies that an emotion in itself is no criterion of its own rightness or value ; that the French Revolution might be in large measure a beneficent outbreak of emotion over true ideas, and a pernicious play of further emotion over delusions. It reminds us that the struggle for and against slavery really represented a conflict of emotions, and that the one was as genuine as the other. From all which it follows that we can never be too studious of the beliefs to which our emotions attach, whether by processes of comparison or of analysis, these being the only means open to us of checking our tendencies and of seeing whether we are making for good or for evil in the world. If we did but hold this idea firmly, how many of our antagonisms would slacken ; how many of our prepossessions would grow temperate ; how many of our fanaticisms would lose

their heat! Instead of there being a presumption against every bold new idea, there would be a certain leaning to a presumption in favor of it.

To-day, for instance, there is a very natural resentment among certain classes at proposals for what is known as a graduated income tax, and for imposing certain obligations on land-owners. I am not now inquiring whether these proposals are reasonable or not. But I do say that when we go back in imagination to the beginnings of the French Revolution; when we remember how the French noblesse actually paid no taxes at all, leaving the whole State burdens to fall on the artificers, and on the wretched tillers of the soil, and how they yet strenuously and warmly resisted the proposals to tax them\*—when we recall these things, we are at least driven to question whether the case of the contemporary English upper class is fundamentally different from that of the old French upper class. What is certain is that the emotion of resentment in the one case was as genuine and as spontaneous as in the other.

And so with our enthusiasms. Remembering that the mere warmth of our feeling for our belief is not in itself a test of our rightness, should we not sometimes temper our estimate of those who differ from us? It is only too clear that even a humane emotion gives no security for its own pro-

\* For making the proposal Turgot was dismissed from office. See Carlyle's 'History', B. ii, c. iv; and the Essay on Turgot in Mr. Morley's *Critical Miscellanies*.



per application ; and that a warm affection for animals, for instance, may entirely fail to make an anti-vivisector just and candid to those who oppose him. But there is a further and less obvious corollary. It has probably surprised many thoughtful people recently to find such a writer as Mr. Arnold suddenly taking up the cry of the war-party in regard to the episode of the battle of Majuba Hill in the Transvaal War, and deriding the Ministry† which had had the unusual courage—a courage, unfortunately, not exhibited since—to cut short an admittedly unjustifiable war when it was found to be unjustifiable, even though our arms had sustained a reverse in the earlier part of it. Mr. Arnold sneered at this policy. I do not say that Mr. Arnold's writings never before exhibited such a spirit ; but certainly many of us were surprised to see it in him ; and it seemed to need explanation. Now, what strikes one on reflection is that similar championship of what had otherwise appeared a barbarous policy has come at different times from such writers as Carlyle, Kingsley, and Mr. Ruskin—as, for instance, in the case of Governor Eyre's doings in Jamaica ; and that one thing these writers had in common even with Mr. Arnold was a strong tendency to stand up for certain ways of thinking, apparently not so much because they were true as because they were old. From which one is strongly led to

† See his article in the *Nineteenth Century*, February, 1885.

infer that a constant bias to the ideas of the past—ideas, that is, which the modern mind is discarding or has discarded—tends to involve a reproduction of the emotions of the past, and these precisely the most undesirable ones.

For the emotions react on each other, and prepare the way for each other, till, whether for good or bad, they go far to determine the acceptance of ideas. It has been the happy distinction of advanced religious thought in this country that it has usually been identified with the love of freedom and the love of peace ; and it is surely significant that an emotion of a more or less contrary tendency should be found associated with more or less reactionary tenets. For, indeed, this respect for the mere assertion of force is one of the most inveterate of the emotional aberrations of our race. It distorts many men's whole conception of the past, enabling them to see only a halo of glory round their country's history at a time when it was full of misery and largely governed by mean ideals ; and the whole cause of the transfiguration is the record of certain naval and military victories. It makes it possible for an admirable poet to sing of a "hope for the world in the coming wars", and to create a contemporary cultus of sentimental bloodshed which has been fitly summed up in the injunction, "Go to the Crimea and thou shalt be saved". It produces a popular attitude of oscillation between callous disregard for the status of our soldiers in time of peace

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and barbaric jubilation over them when they have had some slaughter to perform. From all which harmful things it is the work of all good men to deliver us.

It will not be an easy task, or one soon performed. The poet who sang that the meanest flower could give him thoughts lying too deep for tears, was he who sang that Carnage was God's daughter ; and even the young George Eliot, sensitively attuned to high and humane feelings, is for a time capable of the same strange creed ; so subtle and so sinister are the kinships of those emotions which we are so often tempted to hail as something higher and nobler than patient thought. The final truth is that the general level of emotion follows the general movement of thought—this being the real explanation of the anti-slavery struggle, in which it was not one idea or one emotion that did the work, but the broad development of culture made a new form of emotion possible, which in turn fostered a new doctrine. The new generation differs subtly from the old in its whole mental texture, and thus can respond to appeals to which that was deaf.

We conclude, then, that the upward path for men lies by the way of knowledge and reason—a path from which emotion is in nowise shut out, but in which it is ever more finely touched to finer issues. The path will have its thorns. It may present to us great minds curiously lacking in some forms of sympathy—a Hawthorne strangely



unconcerned about slavery ; a Gibbon terrified into mere fury by a revolution which rights ancient wrongs ; a great evolutionist who may strenuously seek to promote the blind struggle for existence ; but in so far as such a thinker gives us truth he can work only our weal, and if he ever teach mistakenly he will be baffled by forces of beneficence which he himself has stirred. It is such a thinker who has admirably warned us against " the profoundest of all infidelity, the fear lest the truth be bad."\* Free from that fear, we may dream of a future in which emotion shall have become so constantly bent to the betterment of things that men's lives will be a harmonious union, as of " perfect music unto noble words ". We to-day, alas, cannot even fully dream such a scene and such a life ; but in this indefinable hope, as in all good thoughts, our reason and our emotions blend.

\* Spencer's *Essays*, vol. i, 'Progress, Its Laws and Cause,' p. 59.

## THE ETHICS OF VIVISECTION.

(1885.)

AN interesting and even a helpful study in moral science would be a tracing out by the student of the history of his own notions as to right and wrong, from the earliest point to which his memory can go back, down to the moment of the investigation. Few people, perhaps, could give any very detailed account of the transformations their ethical beliefs have undergone since they began to think on moral questions. For the changes have in most cases been extremely numerous—how numerous only the habitually introspective can claim to say.

A tolerably early stage of moral development with most of us is that in which the child, apart from its own instincts of approbation and resentment, has no feeling save one of curiosity in regard to matters of moral judgment. At this stage the child is only attaining a knowledge of what other people regard as right and wrong; the promptings of desire are followed with no hesitations save those given rise to by outside precept; blame for selfish conduct is at first received with more or less open astonishment; and the tendency is to ask absolutely frank and extremely embarrassing questions of elders as to why a given act is wrong. It being the practice of the

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elders to reply with decisive *à priori* solutions, the youthful mind has no resource but to assimilate as well as may be the *à priori* code presented to it ; and of this code the child's conduct becomes a more or less dubious application. Perplexities are likely to occur in the minds of the more inquisitive in regard to many forbidden acts in which they can see no harm ; and there is a distinct balance of probability that any child will on every opportunity commit acts obscurely " felt " to be wrong, because forbidden ; but with only a slight and soon forgotten sense of discomfort in the breach of law. Many grown-up people, now above the average in respect of scrupulosity, will confess to having lied and stolen in their well-trained childhood with only a moderate degree of perturbation as against the pleasure of escaping blame or securing a coveted object. The individual becomes a moral organism, so to speak, only by degrees ; his most rapid transition, after that from moral nescience to pupillage, being in all probability that which takes place sometime in his teens, when he makes some approach to intelligent thinking on religion. The youth whose good fortune it is to proceed slowly from doubt to doubt, till he attains complete rationalism, is likely to have a specially complex experience in respect of his moral creed. At first, when he is rejecting or has rejected the dogma of an inspired or heaven-sent code, he sees no serious difficulty in adjusting his moral judgments. Right and wrong are no harder



problems for him than they were before; and his acquired view as to given lines of secular conduct remains to him, though he may be secretly conscious of having contravened his code rather freely. He is now clear enough as to there being nothing wrong in staying away from church or amusing himself on Sunday: his reasonings have involved that: and other matters remain for him very much as they were. But this is only because of his comprehensive inexperience; and his mental history soon begins to be a record of steps towards a systematic moral philosophy. When he intelligently and vitally grasps the great principle of utility he has undergone the third decisive readjustment of his intellectual relations to life; and, filled with the light of the master idea, he is convinced, perhaps, that morals is henceforth for him all plain sailing. Then comes, however, the further experience of manhood, which gradually forces on him the conviction that there is no royal road to right conduct; that utility is a constantly fluctuating attribute in actions; and that the simple formula, logically all-embracing as it is, for that very reason fails to pack men's acts into hard-and-fast divisions of permanently good and bad.

This kind of individual experience does but imitate in miniature the history of the race, of which the progress has been from pre-moral simplicity to the stage of universal questioning; and it is difficult to understand how even minds which cleave to

the religious creeds of the past can fail, in the cases in which any reasonable penetration can be claimed for them, to recognise both in themselves and in humanity at large the evolutionary character of conscience. We may indeed be sure that they have undergone a substantially similar experience, and we may set down their assertion of an entirely intuitional theory of morals to the capacity for inconsistency which inheres in every Theist as such. That they can have constantly gone on from strength to strength of unwavering moral conviction is not to be believed. Yet two of the stock arguments against utilitarian morality are that it leaves room for dubiety, the implication being that the believer in inspiration is never in doubt as to his line of action ; and that it can lend itself to wrong conduct, as if religious belief never did. To describe such arguments is to destroy them ; and it almost savors of brutality to track the orthodox to the last rallying ground on which, driven to distraction by the scientific blockade on all hands, they feebly resume the internecine strife of their earlier prime. The spectacle becomes a trifle pitiful. Says one Christian Professor, laying down ' *First Principles of Moral Science* ': "A person follows his conscience when he does what he sincerely thinks to be his duty, though he may have mistaken his duty, and acted on a wrong judgment". Whereto another Christian Professor replies : " I greatly prefer to say, that the man sincerely thinks he is following his conscience,

when in reality he is not doing so, rather than lay to the charge of conscience the mass of our erroneous judgments".\* That is to say, A.'s conscience, which has a distinct existence, gives him the admonition "don't", which A. in all good faith takes to be "do"; but B., who is similarly liable to mishear *his* conscience, can be quite sure that A.'s said the opposite of what A. thought, and *vice versa*. Such is moral science as endowed in our universities; reverend gentlemen setting forth in lectures and hand-books what they "prefer to say", good souls!

I have thus preliminarily alluded to these general matters in order, not to enlarge on them, but, on the contrary, to treat them briefly, and so keep within limits the following examination of the ethics of vivisection, it being the tendency of a thoroughgoing discussion of any question in ethics to bring under survey the whole range of the science—if science it be. The lines of the argument on either side can easily be carried back, on the foregoing basis, by the reader who thinks it worth while to do so. But the candid enquirer may perhaps find that he has had enough of transcendental morals for the present, when we have briefly examined its teachings on vivisection.

It is no part of our business here to inquire whether or not vivisection in the past has furthered medical science. All we have to do on that head

\* 'Handbook of Moral Philosophy,' by the Rev. Professor Calderwood, of Edinburgh. Appendix A.



is to note that while the opponents of the practice dispute, not without ability, every claim made for it by its defenders, it is still resorted to under discouragement and inconvenience by some men who have no shadow of satisfaction in giving pain, and who sincerely count on obtaining useful results to add to those they believe to have been got by the same means. The motive for our inquiry is that the anti-vivisectionists, while thus disputing, as they are logically free to do, the practical efficacy of vivisection, strongly contend that it is morally indefensible even if serviceable. It is for the intuitionists here to note that the question of the moral rightness is just as strenuously disputed as that of the scientific fact.

The steps in the controversy are few and simple. The anti-vivisectionist, whom we shall call A, alleges that man has "no right" to give animals pain with a view of escaping it himself. The vivisectionist, whom we shall call V., alleging that the right does exist, puts it on all fours with the right to use animals for food or to make them work. A. replies that, granted the right to kill for food and to put to service, the right to give pain does not follow. And here sets in the deadlock. V. either points to the predacity of animals as indicating the deity's purpose to let one set of them profit by the sufferings of others; or argues that it is for man to decide how far he shall carry his virtually unchallenged right to affect the lot of the creatures inferior to him. On the theistic side A.

replies that to plead the example of the brutes is to degrade our moral standards ; and as against the non-theistic way of putting it he (or she—it is often she) reiterates the denial of the “ right ”.

What then is a “ right ” ; and how is it made out in the case before us? We have seen that A. does not deny the right of man to put animals to service ; and as a rule he concedes the right to kill for food, though some of the party are understood to deny that. Now, either of these cases will suffice to show that the “ right ” of man over animals is simply the assertion of his power. It is occasionally argued, indeed, that where man feeds and cares for an animal his right to its services is one of *quid pro quo* ; but it is only necessary to turn to the case of human slavery to find that “ right ” in this connection has no recognition in contemporary morals. No ethical authority now alleges that any one has the “ right ” to keep another in slavery on the score that he gives him food and shelter. What is really implied in the conception of “ right ”, as regards the relations between men, is simply the sympathetic putting of ourselves in the place of an abstract “ other ”, and vesting in that other our own instincts of self-preservation and self-assertion. We revolt at the idea of being sold and coerced ; and we revolt on behalf of others who so suffer. That is the basis of all our conceptions of “ rights ” as between man and man.

A contrary view, indeed, is widely held. “There

can, I think, be no doubt," says Stuart Mill, "that the *idée mère*, the primitive element in the formation of the notion of justice, was conformity to law."\* But that theory leaves us without any explanation of the origin of law. Are we to say that law was an inexplicable "variation" in social evolution—that laws were formed at random, in obedience to no instincts or convictions; and that whatever they enacted became the standard of conduct? What about the rejection and abolition of laws that were held bad? Mill admits that we stamp as unjust some actions which no law condemns; and he offers the explanation that "even here, the idea of the breach of what ought to be law, still lingers in a modified shape"; which is simply a surrender of the previous contention. The idea of "what ought to be law" is the notion of justice; and the truth is seen to be exactly the reverse of Mill's proposition: that is to say, the "notion of justice" is the *idée mère* of law, not law of justice.

It would be interesting, but difficult, to ascertain how far the vogue of Mill's doctrine is to be credited to the traditions of English jurisprudence. From the legal point of view, indeed, the affiliation of justice to law has a certain practical reasonableness, which is no doubt present to the minds of the publicists who declare that "there is no such thing as 'natural right'". What they

\* 'Utilitarianism,' 7th ed., p. 70.



perceive is that the conceptions of "natural right" among different people are often conflicting ; and that law must be the decisive standard of appeal in society. But it is a perversion of this idea to teach, as Mr. Arnold does, that on self-examination we shall find we have no rights, only duties. That formula is suicidal, appealing as it does to a feeling which is capable of analysis just as far as, and no further than, the sentiment of "right". The consciousness of duty, obviously, exists only in correlation with the consciousness of right : our "duty" is simply the impulse to let others have their rights, which we cognise by sympathy. †

We attribute "natural rights", then, to those whom we conceive as having the same kind of affections and instincts as ourselves ; and wherever such rights are openly or tacitly denied it will be found that the denier virtually lacks this conception of similarity. The tyrannous Englishman among inferior races ; the Western American ill-using Chinese ; the Boer oppressing Zulus—all regard the races they oppress as feeling very differently from themselves. Here, as in every other direction, it is substantially knowledge that

† Mr. Spencer, who has lately revived the "dormant controversy" on this subject, points out that "a whole school of legists on the Continent maintains a belief diametrically opposed to that maintained by the English school. The idea of *Naturrecht* is the root-idea of German jurisprudence. Now, whatever may be the opinion held respecting German philosophy at large, it cannot be characterised as shallow." 'The Man *versus* the State,' p. 87.

ameliorates conduct, though the knowledge may come by way of a variation towards sensitiveness. But how, then, on this view, does it stand with the claim of "rights" for the lower animals? If we recognised rights inhering in them as in the inferior races, it is clear that we should not even feel ourselves entitled to keep them in forced service, much less to kill them; whereas in point of fact we do not even trouble ourselves to make sure that we have the "right" to tame and work horses. The one check we [that is, men of normal temperament] recognise in the matter is in regard to over-working or ill-using them: there we have scruples; but that only amounts to saying that at a certain point we so far conceive similarity between us and the horse as to shrink from causing him serious injury. We do not credit him with our own moral revolt against subjection: we credit him only with feeling pain.

On the other hand, we do not seriously scruple to put a horse to any stress of exertion, even to the point of killing him, when it is a question of our escaping, say, from hostile savages; because here we do not credit him with sense of martyrdom—only, as before, with feeling pain. The "right" to kill for food, again, can hardly be said to be seriously disputed; for even the extreme vegetarian would kill animals rather than let them overrun our fields; and it comes to be a question between breeding for slaughter on the one hand and extermination or partial prevention of breed-

ing on the other. Once killed, an animal may, ethically speaking, as well be eaten as not. All round, then, we make our own needs and interests our guides in dealing with animals, recognising no indefeasible right on their side because we do not hold that they feel as a breach of any "natural right" what would be a breach of that felt by a man. We forcibly tame and burden, we castrate (*i.e.* vivisect), we kill by forced over-exertion, we kill for food: on what grounds, then, shall we deny ourselves the "right" to give animals pain with the object of furthering our medical knowledge to our own advantage?

I am not aware of any argument on the anti-vivisectionists' side which can be pretended to meet that question; and their case therefore seems to me to break down, so far as the appeal to our sense of "right" goes. But as the old saying runs, we shall never fully refute an error until we have shown how it arose; and the origin of the anti-vivisectionist fallacy above analysed is a very interesting matter for further enquiry. That wrathful controversialist Miss Frances Power Cobbe, in her pamphlet on 'The Moral Aspects of Vivisection', thus expresses herself:

"But it is impossible to regard this subject as if it were a mere abstract ethical problem. The vivisection of dull reptiles, and wild rats and rabbits, wherewith the elder generation of students contented themselves, is not alone in question, nor even that of heavy beasts in our pas-



tures ; but by some strange and sinister fatality, the chosen victims at present are the most intelligent and friendly of our domestic favorites—the cats who purr in love and confidence as they sit beside us on the hearth, the dogs whose faithful hearts glow with an affection for us, truer and fonder than we may easily find in any human breast. To disregard all the beautiful and noble moral qualities which such animals exhibit, and coldly contemplate them as if their quivering frames were mere machines of bone and tissue which it might be interesting and profitable to explore with forceps and scalpel, is to display heinous indifference to Love and Fidelity themselves, and surely to renounce the claim to be the object of such sentiments to brute or man ” (pp. 18-19).

All this is transparent enough to those ruthless natures which are capable of exploring the quivering frame of the passage with the forceps and scalpel of dispassionate analysis. Miss Cobbe is an extreme anti-vivisectionist in that she does what we have said the majority do not do—carry her sympathy with animals to the extent of attributing to them, or some of them, a moral and emotional nature closely resembling our own. She lets it appear very plainly that she is moved by purely personal sentiment as distinguished from an impartial sense of justice. Her dog and cat are a great deal to her, and it is the idea of their suffering that excites her. The exigencies of pro-

paganda force her to be so far consistent as to protest against all vivisection, and to deprecate "sport"; but it is tolerably plain that if it were only "dull reptiles" and "wild rats and rabbits", and "the heavy beasts of our pastures" that were vivisected, she would not be greatly concerned. That is, she is not defending a "right" inherent in sentient things as such—though she refers to "Bishop Butler's grand axiom that every sentient creature has an indefeasible claim to be spared pain merely because it is sentient": she is doing special pleading for some of them for which she has a special liking. Her contention virtually is that cats and dogs have a better right to be spared than rats and rabbits, because they have the greater capacity for attachment to us—which is simply putting an "abstract ethical problem" where she disclaimed such a thing. Now we have seen that we admit the "rights" of men because we assume them to feel morally and physically as we should do in their place; but Miss Cobbe's argument, to be relevant from that point of view, would have to allege that we have cause to believe that dogs and cats under vivisection will feel both morally and physically as we do. We are entitled to believe, on the contrary, that their sensitiveness to pain is less, and that they have no moral feelings analogous to what a man's would be under the circumstances.

To some readers that may sound unfeeling; and I am the more ready to come to the next part

of the investigation, which consists in asking whether there are then no moral grounds for checking vivisection. We punish certain forms of cruelty to animals: is it not reasonable to do so? There need be no hesitation in answering in the affirmative; but there is need to ascertain carefully how we have come to act as we do in the matter. The most salient fact in the case is that when we see an animal wantonly ill-used we ourselves suffer a distinct nervous shock, in part closely resembling the shock we experience when we see a horse fall or a dog run over, partly further consisting of a revolt against the torturer. Now this passionate repulsion is an almost inevitable and a not unhealthy sentiment; but it is bad penology at once to punish a man and to vilipend him; and we shall be on safer ground when we say that the offender is an example of incomplete or arrested development in respect of his sympathies, and that our object should simply be to restrain his wrong action by working on his motives. If we can adequately influence him by blame or persuasion, so much the better; for judicial action is a clumsy instrument, and the exemplary effect of public punishment is largely mythical.

To make blame efficacious, however, is not easy; and in either case what we are doing is to take action on the promptings of our jarred sympathies, reinforced by the conviction that indulgence in wanton cruelty to animals tends to pro-



duce a degraded and anti-social type of man, and that letting it go without some kind of public reprobation fosters callousness, and consequently cruelty, in all directions. Here we deliberately interfere with the liberty of our fellows ; and that by way of asserting, not the rights of animals, but our own ; for we do not claim for the hurt beast our own right to freedom : we simply assert our determination to protect our own sensibilities in a case where we are quite convinced that the wounding of them implies an anti-social tendency in the aggressor.

The discerning reader perceives, no doubt, that this is the form of argument used to support the blasphemy and Sabbatarian laws, and religious persecution generally. But the knowledge that in these cases the conviction acted on has been mistaken, is a reason only for very narrowly testing our conviction in the present case. We must take this on its merits, as we do the question of laws against personal indecency. I grant some force in the contention that the true way to prevent cruelty to animals is to teach consideration to the young ; but I incline to think the prevention of cruelty by law is about as safe, and stands on the same moral footing, as the prohibition of indecency. As it has been put by one distinguished physician, " we owe it to ourselves " to prevent wanton cruelty ; and when Miss Cobbe exclaims that such an utterance betrays ignorance of the very alphabet of morality, she only

demonstrates her own omission to learn that alphabet.

We come now to the practical issue : Shall vivisection for purposes of medical research be suppressed on the score that the practice is demoralising, whether useful or not ; or shall we withdraw the restrictions at present laid on it? Those of us who have no fixed prejudice against legislation as such can see that there is a good deal to be said for the present arrangement of licenses, which puts some check on mere experiments in torture and leaves a possibility of conscientious research. For if some of the claims made for vivisectionists be true, the practice may lead to most important discoveries at the expense of no great infliction of suffering ; and in view of our relations to animals in general, it becomes a mere caprice to say that we have no " right " under any circumstances to profit by their pain. The question comes to be one of the spirit in which the vivisection is done, and the estimated tendency of the act in the given case. But when the opponents of vivisection are found protesting against licences on the ground that to give them is to legalise cruelty, one sees some cause to resist even the imposition of a check. For how does the case stand? At this moment a hundred forms of cruelty, in the shape of " sport " and the poisoning of vermin, are not even menaced by law ; and Miss Cobbe admits that " sportsmen " are to be found among those who demand the suppression of vivisection. What

we do is to put a rigorous check on the one form of systematic tampering with animal life—apart from butchering—which can be said to be pursued from respectable or disinterested motives ; and instead of impartially proposing to extend this check to the less defensible forms the anti-vivisectionists simply clamor against the modification of the check as being a sanction.

There could not be a more nefarious tactic, and it is impossible to escape the conclusion that here as in other conjunctures the effect of a predominantly emotional bias is to foster a disregard for one species of moral obligation in those who loudly proclaim another. A benevolent passion is in itself no safer a guide than passion of any other kind. At the best the emotionalist has to rely on stress of language rather than ratiocinative persuasion ; and at the worst the desired effect is compassed by fearless fabrication. Professor Huxley is said to have complained of the “ profligate lying of virtuous women ” in this connection ; and I can testify to having seen and heard some of the lying, from both sexes. I have heard one lady allege in a semi-public meeting that the Professor had declared animals to be automata who did not feel ; and on challenge she could give no reference save a general one which made it practically certain that she was simply misrepresenting his Belfast address, in which he maintained the thesis that men and animals alike are automata, thus leaving the question of their



comparative capacity for pain just as it stood before ; and in which, besides, he expressly said, benevolently rather than logically, that he was strengthened in his rejection of the extreme Cartesian view by the recognition that it might encourage cruel treatment of animals. Between such indulgences in reckless slander and the blunders into which they fall through extreme ignorance, some defenders of the "rights" of animals make a rather sorry moral exhibition. Miss Cobbe has been so egregiously absurd as to call a "reflex action" a "spasm of agony", not knowing that the *sine qua non* of the thing is the absence of sensation in the subject ; and the Scottish Anti-Vivisectionist Society a year or two ago made a vehement attack on a Professor for the cruelty of certain experiments in which he had pointed out that there was no pain at all. Anyone with the merest smattering of physiological knowledge would have known as much from the reports ; but the superfluously sympathetic zoophiles conceived a decapitated frog and an amputated frog's leg as writhing in agony under the hands of the demonstrator.

We see, then, that an excessive sympathy with animals is not at all necessarily an elevating influence, but may, like every other unregulated emotion, lead to some sorts of harmful conduct. What does the extreme attachment to animals, seen in so many anti-vivisectionists, really signify? Obviously, a faculty for taking an extremely

idealised (*i.e.*, false) view of an animal's nature ; for misconceiving, consequently, the relations of things in general ; and for keeping the reasoning faculties in disastrous subjection to the passions. People admit in theory that any personal quality may become a vice merely by running to excess ; but they singularly fail to apply the principle in detail. The zoophile flatters himself that his love of animals is a shining virtue, when in point of fact it is an extravagance which in a measure warps his moral nature, and makes him intellectually unscrupulous towards men in proportion as he is tender towards beasts. Take, further, the conception of the nature of cats and dogs exhibited in the above extract from Miss Cobbe's pamphlet. There is no word there of the other side of the animal nature ; and no recognition of the fact that the fidelity of cats and dogs is practically an unmoralised affection, being simply given to those near them without any save interested discrimination. That is the typical attitude of the adorers of pets, among whom women take the palm, the feminine nature being the more affectional and consequently the more disposed to regard affection as the essential matter in any personality—a tendency of very doubtful advantage. The pet-lover is not disturbed by his cat's cruelties to mice or his dog's ferocity towards other animals : these manifestations of character are serenely set down to irresponsible "instinct" ; while the show of affection, which is equally a

matter of instinct, is called a "noble moral quality". In short, the zoophile's zoophily is mainly egotistic; "my dog's devotion to me" being taken as the summing-up of the dog's relation to life; though sympathy so far operates as to attribute like excellence to other people's dogs. On the lines of Miss Cobbe's contention a dog which is not devoted and a cat which is not affectionate would be almost legitimate subjects for vivisection: which leaves the theory of animals' "rights" in a rather chaotic condition.

Let the phenomenon of zoophily be simply taken scientific note of like any other, and let its good and bad sides be impartially recognised. The good side is the cultivation of emotion and sympathy, which is a condition of all moral and intellectual progress; the bad side is precisely the undue exaltation of these at the cost of reason. And let it not be supposed that the harm of this ends with the slandering of opponents. I have only glanced hitherto at the relation of anti-vivisectionists to "sport", knowing that they suppose themselves to have amply disposed of the arguments on that head; but it is highly important to point out that it is their tendency to assert a most pernicious moral canon in this very connection. Miss Cobbe, while professing to disapprove of sport, thus defends the sportsman:

"The parallel between Vivisection and Field Sports is about as just and accurate as if a tyrant, accused of racking his prisoners in his secret dun-



geons, were to turn round and open a discussion on the Lawfulness of War. That creatures who chase and are chased all their days in fields and waters should have an arch enemy and pursuer in man may be differently estimated as ill or well. But it is almost ludicrous to compare a fox-hunt (for example), with its free chances of escape and its almost instantaneous termination in the annihilation of the poor fox when captured, with the slow, long-drawn agonies of an affectionate trustful dog, fastened down limb by limb, and mangled on its torture trough."

Here we have a sample of the vicious reasoning to which anti-vivisectionism may run, and at the same time an exhibition of positive defect of imagination arising out of the moral bias. Note the fatuity of the phrase about "free chances of escape", and the assumption that the fox suffers nothing save in the moment of death. But worst of all is the clear implication that to find enjoyment in the terror of a hunted animal is venial beside the simple act of inflicting pain for an ulterior scientific purpose. Miss Cobbe, after admitting that field sports do not "seem to harmonise with the highest type of cultivated and human feeling" goes on to say that "the men who follow them *may at least plead the excuses of custom and of partial ignorance*". This, when the very contention in dispute is that the reasoned and deliberate scientific action is right while the following of custom and primitive instinct is bar-

barous! Conceive of a hedonist sportsman pleading that he is cruel by force of custom and out of ignorance, and that he ought consequently to escape blame, while the vivisector who hopes to cure human ills deserves odium!

And that is not all. Another facile moralist, Dr. Anna Kingsford, asks, in reply to an alleged argument:

“Where is the analogy between the vivisector’s laboratory, with its gagged, bound, and trembling victims, carved to death in cold blood, and the field of battle, where every man in each contending army fights for home and country under the inspiration of enthusiasm, ambition, or the desire for renown?”\*

We need not go into the question of the “analogy”; but it is worth while to note how here again we have the very bases of scientific morality overturned in the teaching that the lust of blood is unobjectionable when it pervades two excited armies, but that the readiness to hurt an animal in cold blood for a scientific purpose is hateful. It is another illustration of the tendencies of the emotional temperament. The same person who shrieks at the deliberate vivisection of a rabbit gets into a glow of enthusiasm over the dreary old claptrap about soldiers “fighting for home and country”, and the concept of “ambition” and “the desire for renown”. The sol-

\* ‘Unscientific Science: a Lecture.’ Part II.

dier drunk with carnage, and transformed into a furious savage, mad to slay, is a poetic object in her eyes ; the man who causes carefully measured pain with an eye to benefiting his race is an accursed thing. And this lady, with her *penchant* for insane war, is voluble on the subject of the connection of vivisection with Materialism and Atheism, she being a believer in what she calls " the occult Book ", and a fervent Theist. As a matter of fact her colleague Miss Cobbe co-operates with Atheist anti-vivisectionists in France, while she vilifies Atheists in the mass at home ; and everybody knows that there are Free-thinking anti-vivisectionists and Christian vivisectionists in this country. The difference is, I presume, that the Freethinking opponent of vivisection is satisfied that it does more harm than good, and acts on his conviction as the rest of us would. But the final question for us at present is this : Ought we to help to maintain the close checks on vivisection while those who oppose the practice not only clamor for its entire suppression, but openly make light of barbarous practices as to the immorality and perniciousness of which there can be no dispute among fair moralists ? There is the dilemma. An out-and-out anti-vivisectionist sees no serious harm in letting the housemaid kill the rats by slow poison ; but hotly denounces the doctor for vivisecting a rabbit under anæsthetics. We who try to make our morality reasonable ask which practice is the less de-



moralising and does the most good with its harm : our emotionalist decides the matter by calling the doctor " cold-blooded ", and noting the housemaid's excitement over her operations. We say that thoughtlessness in sport, as in everything else, makes against civilisation ; and that the war spirit is a deplorable survival from times of savagery : our emotional friend thinks long custom partly condones evils, and considers war rather a fine thing, telling us that it promotes " courage ", while vivisection is " cowardice ". On the one hand we have the doubtful question whether the licensing system meets the ends we have in view ; on the other we have the spectacle of the anti-vivisection movement making for irrationality in ethics, empiricism in general thought, gross partiality in practice, falsehood in controversy, and the encouragement of the military spirit. Is it not expedient rather to expose these tendencies than to lend our voices to the condemnation of a practice already disproportionately condemned even in its worse aspects, and, as we have seen, illogically and inequitably attacked in principle?

Let the reader judge for himself. It has been sought in the foregoing pages to set forth the main ethical aspects of the case, without going into the technical question of the efficacy of vivisection. It has been assumed that we all detest those acts of atrocious and almost maniacal cruelty which are recorded of foreign vivisectioners and mostly repudiated by those of this country.

But it has been assumed that there is a vivisection which, whether or not well-judged, is not wanton ; and it is the justifiability of that that has been considered. I have no hesitation in admitting that the question is a difficult one : I rather insist on the difficulty as against those who claim to settle all moral questions offhand by their instincts ; and I would fall back on my preliminary remarks on that head. Dr. Kingsford tells us that "The Materialist [by which she means the non-Theist] has no fundamental notion of Justice. For him everything is vague, relative, inexplicable." I leave it to the enquirer to judge whether the creed of the Theist, with its good Almighty who never gets his own way, but who yet fore-ordained all things, supplies a "fundamental notion of Justice" ; or whether one is to be found in "the occult Book". I have heard one of Dr. Kingsford's supporters propose to make it a misdemeanor to kill dogs, but not to kill cats. There is nothing "vague" or relative there ; but between such precision and Dr. Anna's "occult" teaching that by vivisection we forfeit our "place in the divine Order", one is fain to stick to "Materialism".

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### POSTSCRIPT.

(1903.)

SINCE the foregoing essay was written, over seventeen years ago, the progress of the entire

humanitarian movement has been towards a higher level of consistency and of intellectual rectitude. As represented by the disinterested labors of its excellent journal, *The Humanitarian*, the Society of the same name draws no such suicidal distinction as so many anti-vivisectionists used to draw between vivisection and cruel "sport", but on the contrary makes a successful warfare on the latter. I am not sure whether the fallacious formula of "animals' rights" is still in vogue, as it still was ten years ago; but the stress of the argument is now rightly placed by the agitators on the inutility of most if not of all vivisection.

On this point it is now possible to come to a fairly judicial conclusion. The attacks of anti-vivisectionists have elicited an ostensibly systematic reply in the volume entitled 'Experiments on Animals', by Stephen Paget, certificated by an Introduction by Lord Lister\*; and an attentive perusal of the case there set forth must impress any impartial reader with the smallness and vagueness of the residual claim for vivisection, even on the view that the whole argument is sound. Under 'Experiments on Animals' Mr. Paget includes some that are not of the nature of vivisection at all, such as feeding dogs painlessly in different ways and then killing and dissecting them.

\* Fisher Unwin, 1900.



Nowhere does he seem to realise that there is any *total* scientific or moral problem: that it is necessary to make out some measurable *proportion* between the enormous number of cruel experiments on animals and the scientific results. On his own showing—if indeed he can be said to show anything but an occasional glimpse of the vast field of experimental torture—nine-tenths of the vivisection of the past has been a mere vain dabbling of the hands in blood, with an occasional inconclusive coincidence of experiment and discovery. Not once does he attempt to estimate the proportion of such discoveries to the whole, and so to settle the scientific problem of method.

In regard to some of the most important of the problems handled by Mr. Paget there is no specific evidence whatever as to how the vivisection practised afforded any assistance; and in more than one case the compiler unconsciously gives evidence which proves that the vivisection was quite gratuitous, the necessary clues to the therapeutic discovery being all independently in existence.

This matter calls for detailed discussion, and I will not attempt to deal with it at length in this Postscript beyond pointing out how in the case of myxœdema (in regard to which some of us had been led to believe that the discovery of the thyroid treatment was solely made possible by the experiments of Dr. Horsley on monkeys) Mr. Paget's own record shows that (1) the essential

facts were on record years before those experiments began, and (2) that the therapeutic inference could perfectly well have been made from those facts if the thinking processes of the faculty kept place with their observations. And on this it must be said that the Preface of Lord Lister shows no more trace than does Mr. Paget's volume of the lesson which scientific men have to learn from such records. His lordship, I regret to say, has not even attempted to face the total scientific problem. He takes for granted that the professional case is inexpugnable, and that "the action of those well-meaning persons" who attack it "is based upon ignorance". He proceeds, in short, exactly as does a bishop who precludes to a polemic upon Christian Evidences, or a party leader who fathers a partisan pamphlet. Not thus is the dignity of science to be conserved. Her credentials are those of sheer truth, or nothing; and for her "truth" is something purer than the flag of a professional controversy.

Certainly the way of science is hard, and when Lord Lister is seen declining from it, the other side in the discussion had need walk warily. And I am compelled to except in turn, at the same special point, to the brilliant dialectic of the Hon. Mr. Stephen Coleridge. In his extremely clever Open Letter to the Registrar-General he satirically impeaches that official for publishing statistics which show that there are now more deaths than ever from those very maladies for which the doc-

tors claim to have found cures through vivisection; and among other figures he instances the mortality from myxœdema. Now, as the medical journalists have indignantly shown, this argument is only superficially valid. Twenty years ago the very diagnosis of myxœdema was so little known that its real prevalence is quite problematical; and on the other hand it is quite possible that the *disease* has become more prevalent, though it is now curable. The true issues are, whether the disease is or is not actually curable by the new treatment, and whether that treatment was discovered solely through vivisection. On neither of these issues does Mr. Coleridge offer a negative; and so far the case goes against him by default, though he might easily have won on the second.

It would indeed be unjust to condemn Mr. Coleridge for employing the special pleader's method when that method is constantly employed on the other side. The medical profession is so generally and so uncritically committed to vindicating vivisection through thick and thin that forensic measures on the critical side are almost inevitable. But it may be permitted to a dispassionate onlooker to suggest that the cause of truth will gain from a reform of temper and tactic on both sides; and that the credit will lie mainly with the side which begins.

There is no reason why that side should not be the anti-vivisectionist. The brilliant intellectu-



ality of Mr. Coleridge's polemic might easily be elevated to a quite judicial plane of inquiry ; and on that plane—unless he and I are alike mistaken—he might demonstrate (1) that at least a number of the claims made for vivisection are false, and (2) that the reliance upon it has lamed physiological science. The temper constantly shown by medical journalists on this subject is alone sufficient to rouse the latter suspicion ; so unscientific is it, so passionate, so far from the calm alertness of the true investigator. Even in the above-noted dispute as to myxœdema, it will be seen, the profession did not seem to know, until Mr. Coleridge brought out the fact, that the disease had been gaining ground on them despite the cure. That is to say, they have apparently neglected to study the primary causation of the malady even when they had come to understand its proximate causation. In the same way, what knowledge is now available of the history and nature of vaccinia is almost solely due to the researches and pressures of anti-vaccinationists ; and there has been absolutely no philosophic attempt on the part of orthodox practitioners to ascertain the *reactions* of vaccination apart from its relation to smallpox. It would not be hard for some anti-vivisectionists to be more scientific than many of their opponents.

But I venture to repeat here what I have elsewhere urged on my anti-vivisectionist friends, that they might greatly further their cause by endow-

ing a high-class laboratory for physiological research without vivisection. If they have faith in their own denial of the utility of the practice, they ought to do this if they can ; and they might surely count on the zealous co-operation of students whose sympathies are with them. Scientific gains thus attained would be more persuasive than much declamation.

Unfortunately there is in humanitarians as in other people a primary proclivity to mere coercion where coercion is not the method of true wisdom ; and there ensues the absurd spectacle of a dead set by some of them at the entire medical profession, which is only too generally ready to retaliate in the normal manner by making a dead set at all anti-vivisectionists and justifying all vivisection. Both attitudes are the negation alike of science and of sane morals. To love all dogs and hate all doctors, as some do, is to make zoophily ridiculous ; and to call all critics of vivisection evil names, as even Huxley did, is to show the healer in no better light than the typical priest. In the light of the whole history of science, it is probably quite safe to say that there is some truth on both sides. But it is perhaps still safer to say, in view of the temper shown all round, that on both sides there is much error. Truth is hardly to be reached while that temper prevails.





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