

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



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 homeless  
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 indefeasible 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



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,



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 commonplaces 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 assemblie, 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.