PHYSICS AND POLITICS.

No. II.[1]—The Age of Conflict.

"The difference between progression and stationary inaction," says one of our greatest living writers, "is one of the great secrets which science has yet to penetrate." I am sure I do not pretend that I can completely penetrate it; but it undoubtedly seems to me that the problem is on the verge of solution, and that scientific successes in kindred fields by analogy suggest some principles which wholly remove many of its difficulties, and indicate the sort of way in which those which remain may hereafter be removed too.

But what is the problem? Common English, I might perhaps say common civilised thought, ignores it. Our habitual instructors, our ordinary conversation, our inevitable and ineradicable prejudices tend to make us think that "Progress" is the normal fact in human society, the fact which we should expect to see, the fact which we should be surprised if we did not see. But history refutes this. The ancients had no conception of progress; they did not so much as reject the idea; they did not even entertain the idea. Oriental nations are just the same now. Since history began they have always been what they are. Savages, again, do not improve; they hardly seem to have the basis on which to build, much less the material to put up anything worth having. Only a few nations, and those of European origin, advance; and yet these think—seem irresistibly compelled to think—such advance to be inevitable, natural, and eternal. Why then is this great contrast?

Before we can answer, we must investigate more accurately. No doubt history shows that most nations are stationary now; but it affords reason to think that all nations once advanced. Their progress was arrested at various points; but nowhere, probably not even in the hill tribes of India, not even in the Andaman Islanders, not even in the savages of Terra del Fuego, do we find men who have not got some way. They have made their little progress in a hundred different ways; they have framed with infinite assiduity a hundred curious habits; they have, so to say, *screwed* themselves into the uncomfortable corners of a complex life, which is odd and dreary, but yet is possible. And the corners are never the same in any two parts of the world. Our record begins with a thousand unchanging

(1) Perhaps I may be allowed to say that the break of many months in this series is owing to a long and exhausting illness.—W. B.

edifices, but it shows traces of previous building. In historic times there has been little progress; in prehistoric there must have been much.

In solving, or trying to solve, the question, we must take count of this remarkable difference, and explain it, too, or else we may be sure our principles are utterly incomplete, and perhaps altogether unsound. But what then is that solution, or what are the principles which tend towards it? Three laws, or approximate laws, may, I think, be laid down, with only one of which I can deal in this paper, but all three of which it will be best to state, that it may be seen what I am aiming at.

First. In every particular state of the world, those nations which are strongest tend to prevail over the others; and in certain marked peculiarities the strongest tend to be the best.

Secondly. Within every particular nation the type or types of character then and there most attractive tend to prevail; and the most attractive, though with exceptions, is what we call the best character.

Thirdly. Neither of these competitions is in most historic conditions intensified by extrinsic forces, but in some conditions, such as those now prevailing in the most influential part of the world, both are so intensified.

These are the sort of doctrines with which, under the name of "natural selection" in physical science, we have become familiar; and as every great scientific conception tends to advance its boundaries and to be of use in solving problems not thought of when it was started, so here, what was put forward for mere animal history may, with a change of form, but an identical essence, be applied to human history.

At first some objection was raised to the principle of "natural selection" in physical science upon religious grounds; it was to be expected that so active an idea and so large a shifting of thought would seem to imperil much which men valued. But in this, as in other cases, the objection is, I think, passing away; the new principle is more and more seen to be fatal to mere outworks of religion, not to religion itself. At all events, to the sort of application here made of it, which only amounts to searching out and following up an analogy suggested by it, there is plainly no objection. Every one now admits that human history is guided by certain laws, and all that is here aimed at is to indicate, in a more or less distinct way, an infinitesimally small portion of such laws.

The discussion of these three principles cannot be kept quite apart except by pedantry; but it is almost exclusively with the first—that of the competition between nation and nation, or tribe and tribe (for I must use these words in their largest sense, and so as to include

every cohering aggregate of human beings)—that I can deal now; and even as to that I can but set down a few principal considerations.

The progress of the military art is the most conspicuous, I was about to say the most *showy*, fact in human history. Ancient civilisation may be compared with modern in many respects, and plausible arguments constructed to show that it is better; but you cannot compare the two in military power. Napoleon could indisputably have conquered Alexander; our Indian army would not think much of the Retreat of the Ten Thousand. And I suppose the improvement has been continuous: I have not the slightest pretence to special knowledge; but, looking at the mere surface of the facts, it seems likely that the aggregate battle array, so to say, of mankind—the fighting force of the human race—has constantly and invariably grown. It is true that the ancient civilisation long resisted the "barbarians," and was then destroyed by the barbarians. But the barbarians had improved. "By degrees," says a most accomplished writer,[1] "barbarian mercenaries came to form the largest, or at least the most effective, part of the Roman armies. The body-guard of Augustus had been so composed; the prætorians were generally selected from the bravest frontier troops, most of them Germans." "Thus," he continues, "in many ways was the old antagonism broken down; Romans admitting barbarians to rank and office; barbarians catching something of the manners and culture of their neighbours. And thus, when the final movement came, the Teutonic tribes slowly established themselves through the provinces, knowing something of the system to which they came, and not unwilling to be considered its members." Taking friend and foe together, it may be doubted whether the fighting capacity of the two armies was not as great at last, when the Empire fell, as ever it was in the long period while the Empire prevailed. During the middle ages the combining power of men often failed; in a divided time you cannot collect so many soldiers as in a concentrated time. But this difficulty is political, not military. If you added up the many little hosts of any century of separation, they would perhaps be found equal or greater than the single host, or the fewer hosts, of previous centuries which were more united. Taken as a whole, and allowing for possible exceptions, the aggregate fighting power of mankind has grown immensely, and has been growing continuously since we knew anything about it.

Again, this force has tended to concentrate itself more and more in certain groups which we call "civilised nations." The *literati* of the last century were for ever in fear of a new conquest of the barbarians, but only because their imagination was overshadowed and frightened by the old conquests. A very little consideration would

(1) Mr. Bryce.

have shown them that, since the monopoly of military inventions by cultivated states, real and effective military power tends to confine itself to those states. The barbarians are no longer so much as vanquished competitors; they have ceased to compete at all.

The military vices, too, of civilisation seem to decline just as its military strength augments. Somehow or other, civilisation does not make men effeminate or unwarlike now as it once did. There is an improvement in our fibre—moral, if not physical. In ancient times city people could not be got to fight—seemingly could not fight; they lost their mental courage, perhaps their bodily nerve. But now-a-days in all countries the great cities could pour out multitudes wanting nothing but practice to make good soldiers, and abounding in bravery and vigour. This was so in America; it was so in Prussia; and it would be so in England too. The breed of ancient times was impaired for war by trade and luxury, but the modern breed is not so impaired.

A curious fact indicates the same thing probably, if not certainly. Savages waste away before modern civilisation; they seem to have held their ground before the ancient. There is no lament in any classical writer for the barbarians. The New Zealanders say that the land will depart from their children; the Australians are vanishing; the Tasmanians have vanished. If anything like this had happened in antiquity, the classical moralists would have been sure to muse over it; for it is just the large solemn kind of fact that suited them. On the contrary, in Gaul, in Spain, in Sicily —everywhere that we know of—the barbarian endured the contact of the Roman, and the Roman allied himself to the barbarian. Modern science explains the wasting away of savage men; it says that we have diseases which we can bear, though they cannot, and that they die away before them as our fatted and protected cattle died out before the rinderpest, which is innocuous, in comparison, to the hardy cattle of the Steppes. Savages in the first year of the Christian era were pretty much what they are in the 1800th; and if they stood the contact of ancient civilised men, and cannot stand ours, it follows that our race is presumably tougher than the ancient; for we have to bear, and do bear, the seeds of greater diseases than those the ancients carried with them. We may use, perhaps, the unvarying savage as a metre to gauge the vigour of the constitutions to whose contact he is exposed.

Particular consequences may be dubious, but as to the main fact there is no doubt: the military strength of man has been growing from the earliest time known to our history, straight on till now. And we must not look at times known by written records only; we must travel back to older ages, known to us only by what lawyers call *real* evidence—the evidence of things. Before history

began, there was at least as much progress in the military art as there has at all been since. The Roman legionaries or Homeric Greeks were about as superior to the men of the shell mounds and the flint implements as we are superior to them. There has been a constant acquisition of military strength by man since we know anything of him, either by the documents he has composed or the indications he has left.

The cause of this military growth is very plain. The strongest nation has always been conquering the weaker; sometimes even subduing it, but always prevailing over it. Every intellectual gain, so to speak, that a nation possessed was in the earliest times made use of—was *invested* and taken out—in war; all else perished. Each nation tried constantly to be the stronger, and so made or copied the best weapons; by conscious and unconscious imitation each nation formed a type of character suitable to war and conquest. Conquest improved mankind by the intermixture of strengths; the armed truce, which was then called peace, improved them by the competition of training and the consequent creation of new power. Since the long-headed men first drove the short-headed men out of the best land in Europe, all European history has been the history of the superposition of the more military races over the less military—of the efforts, sometimes successful, sometimes unsuccessful, of each race to get more military; and so the art of war has constantly improved.

But why is one nation stronger than another? In the answer to that, I believe, lies the key to the principal progress of early civilisation, and to some of the progress of all civilisation. The answer is that there are very many advantages—some small and some great—every one of which tends to make the nation which has it superior to the nation which has it not; that many of these advantages can be imparted to subjugated races, or imitated by competing races; and that, though some of these advantages may be perishable or inimitable, yet, on the whole, the energy of civilisation grows by the coalescence of strengths and by the competition of strengths.

II.

By far the greatest advantage is that on which I observed before—that to which I drew all the attention I was able by making the first of these essays an essay on the Pre-economic Age. The first thing to acquire is, if I may so express it, the *legal fibre;* a polity first—what sort of polity is immaterial; a law first—what kind of law is secondary; a person or set of persons to pay deference to—though who he is, or they are, by comparison scarcely signifies.

"There is," it has been said, "hardly any exaggerating the difference between civilised and uncivilised men; it is greater than the

difference between a tame and a wild animal," because man can improve more. But the difference at first was gained in much the same way. The taming of animals as it now goes on among savage nations, and as travellers who have seen it describe it, is a kind of selection. The most wild are killed when food is wanted, and the most tame and easy to manage kept, because they are more agreeable to human indolence, and so the keeper likes them best. Captain Galton, who has often seen strange scenes of savage and of animal life, had better describe the process:—"The irreclaimably wild members of every flock would escape and be utterly lost; the wilder of those that remained would assuredly be selected for slaughter whenever it was necessary that one of the flock should be killed. The tamest cattle—those which seldom ran away, that kept the flocks together, and those which lead them homeward—would be preserved alive longer than any of the others. It is, therefore, these that chiefly become the parents of stock and bequeath their domestic aptitudes to the future herd. I have constantly witnessed this process of selection among the pastoral savages of South Africa. I believe it to be a very important one on account of its rigour and its regularity. It must have existed from the earliest times, and have been in continuous operation, generation after generation, down to the present day."*

Man, being the strongest of all animals, differs from the rest; he was obliged to be his own domesticator; he had to tame himself. And the way in which it happened was, that the most obedient, the tamest tribes are, at the first stage in the real struggle of life, the strongest and the conquerors. All are very wild then; the animal vigour, the savage virtue of the race has died out in none, and all have enough of it. But what makes one tribe—one incipient tribe, one bit of a tribe—to differ from another is their relative faculty of coherence. The slightest symptom of legal development, the least indication of a military bond, is then enough to turn the scale. The compact tribes win, and the compact tribes are the tamest. Civilisation begins, because the beginning of civilisation is a military advantage.

Probably if we had historic records of the ante-historic ages—if some superhuman power had set down the thoughts and actions of men ages before they could set them down for themselves, we should know that this first step in civilisation was the hardest step. But when we come to history as it is, we are more struck with the difficulty of the next step. All the absolutely incoherent men—all the "Cyclopes"—have been cleared away long before there was an authentic account of them. And the least coherent only remain on the "protected" parts of the world, as we may call them. Ordinary civilisation begins near the Mediterranean Sea; the best, doubtless, of the ante-historic civilisations were not far off. From this centre the conquering *swarm*—for such it is—has grown and grown; has

* Ethnological Society's Transactions, vol. iii. p. 137.

widened its subject territories steadily, though not equably, age by age. But geography long defied it. An Atlantic Ocean, a Pacific Ocean, an Australian Ocean, an unapproachable interior Africa, an inaccessible and undesirable hill India, were beyond its range. In such remote places there was no real competition, and on them inferior half-combined men continued to exist. But in the regions of rivalry—the regions where the better man pressed upon the worse man—such half-made associations could not last. They died out, and history did not begin till after they were gone. The great difficulty which history records is not that of the first step, but that of the second step. What is most evident is not the difficulty of getting a fixed law, but getting out of a fixed law; not of cementing (as upon a former occasion I phrased it) a cake of custom, but of breaking the cake of custom; not of making the first preservative habit, but of breaking through it, and reaching something better.

This is the precise case with the whole family of arrested civilisations. A large part, a very large part, of the world seems to be ready to advance to something good—to have prepared all the means to advance to something good,—and then to have stopped, and not advanced. India, Japan, China, almost every sort of Oriental civilisation, though differing in nearly all other things, are in this alike. They look as if they had paused when there was no reason for pausing —when a mere observer from without would say they were likely not to pause.

The reason is, that only those nations can progress which preserve and use the fundamental peculiarity which was given by nature to man's organism as to all other organisms. By a law of which we know no reason, but which is among the first by which Providence guides and governs the world, there is a tendency in descendants to be like their progenitors, and yet a tendency also in descendants to *differ* from their progenitors. The work of nature in making generations is a patchwork—part resemblance, part contrast. In certain respects each born generation is not like the last born; and in certain other respects it is like the last. But the peculiarity of arrested civilisation is to kill out varieties at birth almost; that is, in early childhood, and before they can develop. The fixed custom which public opinion alone tolerates is imposed on all minds, whether it suits them or not. In that case the community feel that this custom is the only shelter from bare tyranny, and the only security for what they value. Most Oriental communities live on land which in theory is the property of a despotic sovereign, and neither they nor their families could have the elements of decent existence unless they held the land upon some sort of fixed terms. Land in that state of society is (for all but a petty skilled minority) a necessary of life, and all the unincreasable land being occupied, a man who is turned out of his

holding is turned out of this world, and must die. And our notion of written leases is as out of place in a world without writing and without reading as a House of Commons among Andaman Islanders. Only one check, one sole shield for life and good, is then possible; —usage. And it is but too plain how in such places and periods men cling to customs because customs alone stand between them and starvation.

A still more powerful cause co-operated, if a cause more powerful can be imagined. Dryden had a dream of an early age, "when wild in woods the noble savage ran;" but "when lone in woods the cringing savage crept" would have been more like all we know of that early, bare, painful period. Not only had they no comfort, no convenience, not the very beginnings of an epicurean life, but their mind within was as painful to them as the world without. It was full of fear. So far as the vestiges inform us, they were afraid of everything; they were afraid of animals, of certain attacks by near tribes, and of possible inroads from far tribes. But, above all things, they were frightened of "the world;" the spectacle of nature filled them with awe and dread. They fancied there were powers behind it which must be pleased, soothed, flattered, and this very often in a number of hideous ways. We have too many such religions, even among races of great cultivation. Men change their religions more slowly than they change anything else; and accordingly we have religions "of the ages"—(it is Mr. Jowett who so calls them)—of the "ages before morality;" of ages of which the civil life, the common maxims, and all the secular thoughts have long been dead. "Every reader of the classics," said Dr. Johnson, "finds their mythology tedious." In that old world, which is so like our modern world in so many things, so much more like than many far more recent, or some that live beside us, there is a part in which we seem to have no kindred, which we stare at, of which we cannot think how it could be credible, or how it came to be thought of. This is the archaic part of that very world which we look at as so ancient; an "antiquity" which descended to them, hardly altered, perhaps, from times long antecedent, which were as unintelligible to them as to us, or more. How this terrible religion—for such it was in all living detail, though we make, and the ancients then made, an artistic use of the more attractive bits of it—weighed on man, the great poem of Lucretius, the most of a nineteenth-century poem of any in antiquity, brings before us with a feeling so vivid as to be almost a feeling of our own. Yet the classical religion is a mild and tender specimen of the preserved religions. To get at the worst, you should look where the destroying competition has been least,—at America, where sectional civilisation was rare, and a pervading coercive civilisation did not exist; at such religions as those of the Aztecs.

At first sight it seems impossible to imagine what conceivable function such awful religions can perform in the economy of the world. And no one can fully explain them. But one use they assuredly had: they fixed the yoke of custom thoroughly on mankind. They were the prime agents of the pre-economic era. They put upon a fixed law a sanction so fearful that no one could dream of not conforming to it.

No one will ever comprehend the arrested civilisations unless he sees the strict dilemma of early society. Either men had no law at all, and lived in confused tribes, hardly hanging together, or they had to obtain a fixed law by processes of incredible difficulty. Those who surmounted that difficulty soon destroyed all those that lay in their way who did not. And then they themselves were caught in their own yoke. The customary discipline, which could only be imposed on any early men by terrible sanctions, continued with those sanctions, and killed out of the whole society the propensities to variation which were the principle of progress.

Experience shows how incredibly difficult it is to get men really to encourage the principle of originality. They will admit it in theory, but in practice the old error—the error which arrested a hundred civilisations—returns again. Men are too fond of their own life, too credulous of the completeness of their own ideas, too angry at the pain of new thoughts, to be able to bear easily with a changing existence; or else, *having* new ideas, they want to enforce them on mankind—to make them heard, and admitted, and obeyed before, in simple competition with other ideas, they would ever be so naturally. At this very moment there are the most rigid Comtists teaching that we ought to be governed by a hierarchy—a combination of *savans* orthodox in science. Yet who can doubt that Comte would have been hanged by his own hierarchy; that his *essor matériel*, which was in fact troubled by the "theologians and metaphysicians" of the polytechnic school, would have been more impeded by the government he wanted to make? And then the secular Comtists, Mr. Harrison and Mr. Beesly, who want to "Frenchify the English institutions"—that is, to introduce here an imitation of the Napoleonic system, a dictatorship founded on the proletariat—who can doubt that if both these clever writers had been real Frenchmen they would have been irascible anti-Bonapartists, and have been sent to Cayenne long ere now? The wish of these writers is very natural. They want to "organise society," to erect a despot who will do what they like, and work out their ideas; but any despot will do what he himself likes, and will root out new ideas ninety-nine times for once that he introduces them.

Again, side by side with these Comtists, and warring with them—at least with one of them—is Mr. Arnold, whose poems we know by heart, and who has, as much as any living Englishman, the genuine

literary impulse; and yet even he wants to put a yoke upon us—and worse than a political yoke, an academic yoke, a yoke upon our minds and our styles. He, too, asks us to imitate France; and what else can we say than what the two most thorough Frenchmen of the last age did say?—"Dans les corps à talent, nulle distinction ne fait ombrage, si ce n'est pas celle du talent. Un duc et pair honore l'Académie Française, qui ne veut point de Boileau, refuse la Bruyère, fait attendre Voltaire, mais reçoit tout d'abord Chapelain et Conrart. De même nous voyons à l'Académie Grecque le vicomte invité, Coräi repoussé, lorsque Jormard y entre comme dans un moulin." Thus speaks Paul-Louis Courier in his own brief inimitable prose. And a still greater writer—a real Frenchman, if ever there was one, and (what many critics would have denied to be possible) a great poet by reason of his *most* French characteristics—Béranger, tells us in verse:—

"Je croyais voir le président
Faire bâiller—en répondant
Que l'on vient de perdre un grand homme;
Que moi je le vaux, Dieu sait comme.
Mais ce président sans facon [1]
Ne pérore ici qu'en chanson:
Toujours trop tôt sa harangue est finie.
Non, non, ce n'est point comme à l'Académie;
Ce n'est point comme à l'Académie.

"Admis enfin, aurai-je alors,
Pour tout esprit, l'esprit de corps?
Il rend le bon sens, quoi qu'on dise,
Solidaire de la sottise;
Mais, dans votre société,
L'esprit de corps, c'est la gaîté.
Cet esprit là règne sans tyrannie.
Non, non, ce n'est point comme à l'Académie;
Ce n'est point comme à l'Académie."

Asylums of common-place, he hints, academies must ever be. But that sentence is too harsh; the true one is—the academies are asylums of the ideas and the tastes of the last age. "By the time," I have heard a most eminent man of science observe, "by the time a man of science attains eminence on any subject, he becomes a nuisance upon it, because he is sure to retain errors which were in vogue when he was young, but which the new race have refuted." These are the sort of ideas which find their home in academies, and out of their dignified windows pooh-pooh new things.

I may seem to have wandered far from early society, but I have not wandered. The true scientific method is to explain the past by the present—what we see by what we do not see. We can only comprehend why so many nations have not varied, when we see how hateful variation is; how everybody turns against it; how not only the conservatives of speculation try to root it out, but the very innovators invent

(1) Désaugiers.

most rigid machines for crushing the "monstrosities and anomalies" —the new forms, out of which, by competition and trial, the best is to be selected for the future. The point I am bringing out is simple:—one most important pre-requisite of a prevailing nation is that it should have passed out of the first state of civilisation into the second stage—out of the stage where permanence is most wanted into that where variability is most wanted; and you cannot comprehend why progress is so slow till you see how hard the most obstinate tendencies of human nature make that step to mankind.

Of course the nation we are supposing must keep the virtues of its first stage as it passes into the after stage, else it will be trodden out; it will have lost the savage virtues in getting the beginning of the civilised virtues; and the savage virtues which tend to war are the daily bread of human nature. Carlyle said, in his graphic way, "The ultimate question between every two human beings is, 'Can I kill thee, or canst thou kill me?'" History is strewn with the wrecks of nations which have gained a little progressiveness at the cost of a great deal of hard manliness, and have thus prepared themselves for destruction as soon as the movements of the world gave a chance for it. But these nations have come out of the "pre-economic stage" too soon; they have been put to learn while yet only too apt to unlearn. Such cases do not vitiate, they confirm, the principle—that a nation which has just gained variability without losing legality has a singular likelihood to be a prevalent nation.

No nation admits of an abstract definition; all nations are beings of many qualities and many sides; no historical event exactly illustrates any one principle; every cause is intertwined and surrounded with a hundred others. The best history is but like the art of Rembrandt; it casts a vivid light on certain selected causes, on those which were best and greatest; it leaves all the rest in shadow and unseen. To make a single nation illustrate a principle, you must exaggerate much and you must omit much. But, not forgetting this caution, did not Rome —the prevalent nation in the ancient world—gain her predominance by the principle on which I have dwelt? In the thick crust of her legality there was hidden a little seed of adaptiveness. Even in her law itself no one can fail to see that, binding as was the habit of obedience, coercive as use and wont at first seem, a hidden impulse of extrication *did* manage, in some queer way, to change the substance while conforming to the accidents—to do what was wanted for the new time while seeming to do only what was directed by the old time. And the moral of their whole history is the same: each Roman generation, so far as we know, differs a little—and in the best times often but a *very* little—from its predecessors. And therefore the history is so continuous as it goes, though its two ends are so unlike. The history of many nations is like the stage of the English drama: one scene is

succeeded on a sudden by a scene quite different,—a cottage by a palace, and a windmill by a fortress. But the history of Rome changes as a good diorama changes; while you look, you hardly see it alter; each moment is hardly different from the last moment; yet at the close the metamorphosis is complete, and scarcely anything is as it began. Just so in the history of the great prevailing city: you begin with a town and you end with an empire, and this by unmarked stages. So shrouded, so shielded, in the coarse fibre of other qualities was the delicate principle of progress, that it never failed, and it was never broken.

One standing instance, no doubt, shows that the union of progressiveness and legality does not secure supremacy in war. The Jewish nation has its type of progress in the prophets, side by side with its type of permanence in the law and Levites, more distinct than any other ancient people. Nowhere in common history do we see the two forces—both so necessary and both so dangerous—so apart and so intense: Judæa changed in inward thought, just as Rome changed in exterior power. Each change was continuous, gradual, and good. In early times every sort of advantage tends to become a military advantage; such is the best way, then, to keep it alive. But Jewish gain never did so; beginning in religion, contrary to a thousand analogies, it remained religious. *For* that we care for them; *from* that have issued endless consequences. But I cannot deal with such matters here, nor are they to my purpose. As respects this essay, Judæa is an example of combined variability and legality; not investing itself in warlike power, and so perishing at last, but bequeathing nevertheless a legacy of the combination in imperishable mental effects.

It may be objected that this principle is like saying that men walk when they do walk, and sit when they do sit. The problem is, why do men progress? And the answer suggested seems to be, that they progress when they have a certain sufficient amount of variability in their nature. This seems to be the old style of explanation by occult qualities. It seems like saying that opium sends men to sleep because it has a soporific virtue, and bread feeds because it has an alimentary quality. But the explanation is not so absurd. It says: "The beginning of civilisation is marked by an intense legality; that legality is the very condition of its existence, the bond which ties it together; but that legality—that tendency to impose a settled customary yoke upon all men and all actions—if it goes on, kills out the variability implanted by nature, and makes different men and different ages facsimiles of other men and other ages, as we see them so often. Progress is only possible in those happy cases where the force of legality has gone far enough to bind the nation together, but not far enough to kill out all varieties and destroy nature's perpetual tendency to change." The point of the solution is not the invention of an imaginary

agency, but an assignment of comparative magnitude to two known agencies.

III.

This advantage is one of the greatest in early civilisation—one of the facts which give a decisive turn to the battle of nations; but there are many others. A little perfection in *political institutions* may do it. Travellers have noticed that among savage tribes those seemed to answer best in which the monarchical power was most predominant, and those worst in whom the "rule of many" was in its vigour. So long as war is the main business of nations, temporary despotism—despotism during the campaign—is indispensable. Macaulay justly said that many an army has prospered under a bad commander, but no army has ever prospered under a "debating society;" that many-headed monster is then fatal. Despotism grows in the first societies, just as democracy grows in more modern societies; it is the government answering the primary need, and congenial to the whole spirit of the time. But despotism is unfavourable to the principle of variability, as all history shows. It tends to keep men in the customary stage of civilisation; its very fitness for that age unfits it for the next. It prevents men from passing into the first age of progress—the *very* slowly and *very* gradually improving age. Some "standing system" of semi-free discussion is as necessary to break the thick crust of custom and begin progress as it is in later ages to carry on progress when begun; probably it is even more necessary. And in the most progressive races we find it. I have spoken already of the Jewish prophets, the life of that nation, and the principle of all its growth. But a still more progressive race —that by which secular civilisation was once created, by which it is now mainly administered—had a still better instrument of progression. "In the very earliest glimpses," says Mr. Freeman, "of Teutonic political life, we find the monarchic, the aristocratic, and the democratic elements already clearly marked. There are leaders with or without the royal title; there are men of noble birth, whose noble birth (in whatever the original nobility may have consisted) entitles them to a pre-eminence in every way; but beyond these there is a free and armed people, in whom it is clear that the ultimate sovereignty resides. Small matters are decided by the chiefs alone; great matters are submitted by the chiefs to the assembled nation. Such a system is far more than Teutonic; it is a common Aryan possession; it is the constitution of the Homeric Achaians on earth and of the Homeric gods on Olympus." Perhaps, and indeed probably, this constitution may be that of the primitive tribe which Romans left to go one way, and Greeks to go another, and Teutons to go a third. The tribe took it with them, as the English

take the common law with them, because it was the one kind of polity which they could conceive and act upon; or it may be that the emigrants from the primitive Aryan stock only took with them a good aptitude—an excellent political nature, which similar circumstances in distant countries were afterwards to develop into like forms. But anyhow it is impossible not to trace the supremacy of Teutons, Greeks, and Romans in part to their common form of government. The contests of the assembly cherished the principle of change; the influence of the elders insured sedateness and preserved the mould of thought; and, in the best cases, military discipline was not impaired by freedom, though military intelligence was enhanced with the general intelligence. A Roman army was a free body, at its own choice governed by a peremptory despotism.

The *mixture of races* was often an advantage, too. Much as the old world believed in pure blood, it had very little of it. Most historic nations conquered pre-historic nations, and though they massacred many, they did not massacre all. They enslaved the subject men, and they married the subject women. No doubt the whole bond of early society was the bond of descent; no doubt it was essential to the notions of a new nation that it should have had common ancestors; the modern idea that vicinity of habitation is the natural cement of civil union would have been repelled as an impiety if it could have been conceived as an idea. But by one of those legal fictions which Mr. Maine describes so well, primitive nations contrived to do what they found convenient, as well as to adhere to what they fancied to be right. When they did not beget they *adopted*; they solemnly made believe that new persons were descended from the old stock, though everybody knew that in flesh and blood they were not. They made an artificial unity in default of a real unity; and what it is not easy to understand now, the sacred sentiment requiring unity of race was somehow satisfied: what was made did as well as what was born. Nations with these sort of maxims are not likely to have unity of race in the modern sense, and as a physiologist understands it. What sorts of unions improve the breed, and which are worse than both the father-race and the mother, it is not very easy to say. The subject has just been reviewed by M. Quatrefages in an elaborate report upon the occasion of the French Exhibition, of all things in the world. M. Quatrefages quotes from another writer the phrase that South America is a great laboratory of experiments in the mixture of races, and reviews the different results which different cases have shown. In South Carolina the Mulatto race are not very prolific, whereas in Louisiana and Florida they decidedly are so. In Jamaica and in Java the Mulatto cannot reproduce itself after the third generation; but on the continent of America, as everybody knows, the mixed race is now most numerous, and spreads generation

after generation without impediment. Equally various likewise in various cases has been the fate of the mixed race between the white man and the native American; sometimes it prospers, sometimes it fails. And M. Quatrefages concludes his description thus: "En acceptant comme vraies toutes les observations qui tendent à faire admettre qu'il en sera autrement dans les localités dont j'ai parlé plus haut, quelle est la conclusion à tirer de faits aussi peu semblables? Evidemment, on est obligé de reconnaître que le développement de la race mulâtre est favorisé, retardé ou empêché par des circonstances locales; en d'autres termes, qu'il dépend des influences exercées par l'ensemble des conditions d'existence par le *milieu*." By which I understand him to mean that the mixture of race sometimes brings out a form of character better suited than either parent form to the place and time; that in such cases, by a kind of natural selection, it dominates over both parents, and perhaps supplants both, whereas in other cases the mixed race is not as good then and there as other parent forms, and then it passes away soon and of itself.

Early in history the continual mixtures by conquest were just so many experiments in mixing races as are going on in South America now. New races wandered into new districts, and half killed, half mixed with the old races. And the result was doubtless as various and as difficult to account for then as now; sometimes the crossing answered, sometimes it failed. But when the mixture was at its best, it must have excelled both parents in that of which so much has been said; that is, variability, and consequently progressiveness. There is more life in mixed nations. France, for instance, is justly said to be the mean term between the Latin and the German races. A Norman, as you may see by looking at him, is of the North; a Provençal is of the South, of all that there is most Southern. You have in France Latin, Celtic, German, compounded in an infinite number of proportions: one as she is in feeling, she is various not only in the past history of her various provinces, but in their present temperaments. Like the Irish element and the Scotch element in the English House of Commons, the variety of French races contributes to the play of the polity; it gives a chance for fitting new things which otherwise there would not be. And early races must have wanted mixing more than modern races. It is said, in answer to the Jewish boast that "their race still prospers, though it is scattered and breeds in-and-in," "You prosper *because* you are so scattered; by acclimatisation in various regions your nation has acquired singular elements of variety; it contains within itself the principle of variability which other nations must seek by intermarriage." In the beginning of things there was certainly no cosmopolitan race like the Jews; each race was a sort of "parish race," narrow in thought and bounded in range, and it wanted mixing accordingly.

But the mixture of races has a singular danger as well as a singular advantage in the early world. We know now the Anglo-Indian suspicion or contempt for "half-castes." The union of the Englishman and the Hindoo produces something not only between races, but *between moralities*. They have no inherited creed or plain place in the world; they have none of the fixed traditional sentiments which are the stays of human nature. In the early world many mixtures must have wrought many ruins; they must have destroyed what they could not replace,—an inbred principle of discipline and of order. But if these unions of races did not work thus; if, for example, the two races were so near akin that their morals united as well as their breeds, if one race by its great numbers and prepotent organisation so presided over the other as to take it up and assimilate it, and leave no separate remains of it, *then* the admixture was invaluable. It added to the probability of variability, and therefore of improvement; and if that improvement even in part took the military line, it might give the mixed and ameliorated state a steady advantage in the battle of nations, and a greater chance of lasting in the world.

Another mode in which one state acquires a superiority over competing states is by *provisional* institutions, if I may so call them. The most important of these—slavery—arises out of the same early conquest as the mixture of races. A slave is an unassimilated, an undigested atom; something which is in the body politic, but yet is hardly part of it. Slavery, too, has a bad name in the later world, and very justly. We connect it with gangs in chains, with laws which keep men ignorant, with laws that hinder families. But the evils which we have endured from slavery in recent ages must not blind us to, or make us forget, the great services that slavery rendered in early ages. There is a wonderful presumption in its favour; it is one of the institutions which, at a certain stage of growth, all nations in all countries choose and cleave to. "Slavery," says Aristotle, "exists by the law of nature," meaning that it was everywhere to be found—was a rudimentary universal point of polity. "There are very many English colonies," said Edward Gibbon Wakefield, as late as 1848, "who would keep slaves at once if we would let them," and he was speaking not only of old colonies trained in slavery, and raised upon the products of it, but likewise of new colonies started by freemen, and which ought, one would think, to wish to contain freemen only. But Wakefield knew what he was saying; he was a careful observer of rough societies, and he had watched the minds of men in them. He had seen that *leisure* is the great need of early societies, and slaves only can give men leisure. All freemen in new countries must be pretty equal; every one has labour, and every one has land; capital, at least in agricultural countries (for pastoral countries are very

different), is of little use; it cannot hire labour; the labourers go and work for themselves. There is a story often told of a great English capitalist who went out to Australia with a shipload of labourers and a carriage; his plan was that the labourers should build a house for him, and that he would keep his carriage, just as in England. But (so the story goes) he had to try to live in his carriage, for his labourers left him, and went away to work for themselves.

In such countries there can be few gentlemen and no ladies. Refinement is only possible when leisure is possible; and slavery first makes it possible. It creates a set of persons born to work that others may not work, and not to think in order that others may think. The sort of originality which slavery gives is of the first practical advantage in early communities; and the repose it gives is a great artistic advantage when they come to be described in history. The patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob could not have had the steady calm which marks them, if they had themselves been teased and hurried about their flocks and herds. Refinement of feeling and repose of appearance have indeed no market value in the early bidding of nations; they do not tend to secure themselves a long future or any future. But originality in war does, and slave-owning nations, having time to think, are likely to be more shrewd in policy and more crafty in strategy.

No doubt this momentary gain is bought at a ruinous after-cost. When other sources of leisure become possible, the one use of slavery is past. But all its evils remain, and even grow worse. "Retail" slavery—the slavery in which a master owns a few slaves, whom he well knows and daily sees—is not at all an intolerable state; the slaves of Abraham had no doubt a fair life, as things went in that day. But wholesale slavery, where men are but one of the investments of large capital, and where a great owner, so far from knowing each slave, can hardly tell how many gangs of them he works, is an abominable state. This is the slavery which has made the name revolting to the best minds, and has nearly rooted the thing out of the best of the world. There is no out-of-the-way marvel in this. The whole history of civilisation is strewn with creeds and institutions which were invaluable at first, and deadly afterwards. Progress would not have been the rarity it is if the early food had not been the late poison. A full examination of these provisional institutions would need half a volume, and would be out of place and useless now. Venerable oligarchy, august monarchy, are two that would alone need large chapters. But the sole point here necessary is to say that such preliminary forms and feelings at first often bring many graces and many refinements, and often tend to secure them by the preservative military virtue.

There are cases in which some step in *intellectual* progress gives

an early society some gain in war; more obvious cases are when some kind of *moral* quality gives some such gain. War both needs and generates certain virtues; not the highest, but what may be called the preliminary virtues, as valour, veracity, the spirit of obedience, the habit of discipline. Any of these, and of others like them, when possessed by a nation, and no matter how generated, will give them a military advantage, and make them more likely to *stay* in the race of nations. The Romans probably had as much of these efficacious virtues as any race of the ancient world,—perhaps as great as any race in the modern world too. And the success of the nations which possess these martial virtues has been the great means by which their continuance has been secured in the world, and the destruction of the opposite vices insured also. Conquest is the missionary of valour, and the hard impact of military virtues beats meanness out of the world.

In the last century it would have sounded strange to speak, as I am going to speak, of the military advantage of *religion*. Such an idea would have been opposed to ruling prejudices, and would hardly have escaped philosophical ridicule. But the notion is but a commonplace in our day, for a man of genius has made it his own. Mr. Carlyle's books are deformed by phrases like "infinities and varieties," and altogether are full of faults, which attract the very young and deter all that are older. In spite of his great genius, after a long life of writing, it is a question still whether even a single work of his can take a lasting place in high literature. There is a want of sanity in their manner which throws a suspicion on their substance (though it is often profound); and he brandishes one or two fallacies, of which he has himself a high notion, but which plain people will always detect and deride. But whatever may be the fate of his fame, Mr. Carlyle has taught the present generation many lessons, and one of these is that "God-fearing" armies are the best armies. Before his time people laughed at Cromwell's saying, "Trust in God, and keep your powder dry." But we now know that the trust was of as much use as the powder, if not of more. That high concentration of steady feeling makes men dare everything and do anything.

This subject would run to an infinite extent if any one were competent to handle it. Those kinds of morals and that kind of religion which tend to make the firmest and most effectual character are sure to prevail, all else being the same, and creeds or systems that conduce to a soft limp mind tend to perish, except some hard extrinsic force keep them alive. Thus Epicureanism never prospered at Rome, but Stoicism did; the stiff, serious character of the great prevailing nation was attracted by what seemed a confirming creed, and deterred by what looked like a

relaxing creed. The inspiriting doctrines fell upon the ardent character, and so confirmed its energy. Strong beliefs win strong men, and then make them stronger. Such is no doubt one cause why Monotheism tends to prevail over Polytheism; it produces a higher, steadier character, calmed and concentrated by a great single object; it is not confused by competing rites, or distracted by miscellaneous deities. Polytheism is religion *in commission*, and it is weak accordingly. But it will be said the Jews, who were monotheist, were conquered by the Romans, who were polytheist. Yes, it must be answered, because the Romans had other gifts; they had a capacity for politics, a habit of discipline, and of these the Jews had not the least. The religious advantage *was* an advantage, but it was counter-weighed.

No one should be surprised at the prominence given to war. We are dealing with early ages; nation *making* is the occupation of man in these ages, and it is war that makes nations. Nation *changing* comes afterwards, and is mostly effected by peaceful revolution, though even then war, too, plays its part. The idea of an indestructible nation is a modern idea; in early ages all nations were destroyable, and the further we go back, the more incessant was the work of destruction. The internal decoration of nations is a sort of secondary process, which succeeds when the main forces that create nations have principally done their work. We have here been concerned with the political scaffolding; it will be the task of other papers to trace the process of political finishing and building. The nicer play of finer forces may then require more pleasing thoughts than the fierce fights of early ages can ever suggest. It belongs to the idea of progress that beginnings can never seem attractive to those who live far on; the price of improvement is, that the unimproved will always look degraded.

But how far are the strongest nations really the best nations? how far is excellence in war a criterion of other excellence? I cannot answer this now fully, but three or four considerations are very plain. War, as I have said, nourishes the "preliminary" virtues, and this is almost as much as to say that there are virtues which it does not nourish. All which may be called "grace" as well as virtue it does not nourish; humanity, charity, a nice sense of the rights of others, it certainly does not foster. The insensibility to human suffering, which is so striking a fact in the world as it stood when history first reveals it, is doubtless due to the warlike origin of the old civilisation. Bred in war, and nursed in war, it could not revolt from the things of war, and one of the principal of these is human pain. Since war has ceased to be the moving force in the world, men have become more tender one to another, and shrink from what they used to inflict without caring; and this not so much because men are im-

proved (which may or may not be in various cases), but because they have no longer the daily habit of war,—have no longer formed their notions upon war, and therefore are guided by thoughts and feelings which soldiers as such—soldiers educated simply by their trade—are too hard to understand.

Very like this is the contempt for physical weakness and for women which marks early society too. The non-combatant population is sure to fare ill during the ages of combat. But these defects, too, are cured or lessened; women have now marvellous means of winning their way in the world; and mind without muscle has far greater force than muscle without mind. These are some of the after-changes in the interior of nations, of which the causes must be scrutinised, and I now mention them only to bring out how many softer growths have now half-hidden the old and harsh civilisation which war made.

But it is very dubious whether the spirit of war does not still colour our morality far too much. Metaphors from law and metaphors from war make most of our current moral phrases, and a nice examination would easily explain that both rather vitiate what both often illustrate. The military habit makes man think far too much of definite action, and far too little of brooding meditation. Life is not a set campaign, but an irregular work, and the main forces in it are not overt resolutions, but latent and half-involuntary promptings. The mistake of military ethics is to exaggerate the conception of discipline, and so to present the moral force of the will in a barer form than it ever ought to take. Military morals can direct the axe to cut down the tree, but it knows nothing of the quiet force by which the forest grows.

What has been said is enough, I hope, to bring out that there are many qualities and many institutions of the most various sort which give nations an advantage in military competition; that most of these and most warlike qualities tend principally to good; that the constant winning of these favoured competitors is the particular mode by which the best qualities wanted in elementary civilisation are propagated and preserved.

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