

CONTRASTS OF ANCIENT AND MODERN HISTORY.

THE whole interest of history depends on the eternal likeness of human nature to itself, and on the similarities or analogies which we in consequence perpetually discover between that which has been and that which is. Were it otherwise, all the narratives of the past would be an enigma to our understandings; for we should be without that sympathy which kindles imagination and gives insight; nor would the experience of the ancient world afford instruction or warning to him who is trying to anticipate futurity. With good reason, therefore, the greatest stress is ordinarily laid on this side of the question—the similarities to be detected between the past and the present. In the world of Greece or Rome, of Egypt or Judæa, Carthage or Babylon, the same never-ending struggles of opposite principles were at work, with which we are so well acquainted in modern times. The contests between high birth and wealth, between rich and poor, between conservatives and progressists, to say nothing of the purely moral conflicts of patriotism and selfishness, justice and oppression, mercy and cruelty, all show themselves in every highly developed community, in proportion to the fulness of information which we enjoy concerning it. The names and the form often differ, when the substance was the same as now. Nevertheless, it is equally needful to be aware of the points at which similarity ceases and contrast begins; otherwise, our application of history to practical uses will be mere delusive pedantry. This, no doubt, is the difficulty, through which no golden rule can avail to help us. We are thrown back upon good sense to judge of each question as it occurs, and all that the writer of history or the philosopher can do for the aid of readers, is, to state

broadly what contrasts can be traced between ancient and modern times, leaving it to be inquired how far these may happen to affect any case in hand.

The very expressions, Ancient and Modern History, need a preliminary caution. Some nations may seem to be in nearly the same state in ancient and in modern times: as the roving Arabs and Tartars; perhaps even the inhabitants of China and its neighbouring Archipelago. All such people are tacitly excluded from this discussion; roving tribes, because they have no history worth the name; the Chinese nations, because their culture notoriously has become stationary, and, as we have no history of their earlier times, we cannot detect such contrasts as may really exist between their present and former state. By modern history we must chiefly mean Christian history, yet not so as to exclude the Mohammedan nations. They too have their strong points of contrast to the ancient military monarchies, and will be treated in their turn; but their history is certainly monotonous. One form of government only—military despotism—has arisen among them; and, owing to this meagreness, there is less to say about them. The Mohammedan empires, as in chronology they more properly belong to the middle age, so in their actual development appear to be midway between their prototypes in the ancient and their representatives in the modern Christian world. Generally speaking, it is only between things in important senses alike that it is worth while to insist on unlikeness. To contrast things different in kind, is seldom needed; but where similarity is close, to point out dissimilarity is instructive.

I. The first topic which we may make prominent is contained in the word slavery. In modern Christen-

dom slavery is an anomaly. It had pined away and vanished in Europe in proportion to civilisation. When first it was established in the American colonies, no one foresaw the magnitude it would assume. When the great Republican Union arose, its founders would not admit the word slave or any equivalent into the Federal constitution. Believing that slavery must soon die out of itself, they declined any direct controversy about it, and veiled its actual existence under a general term that would include apprentices, criminals under sentence, or even minors; alas! not foreseeing that the invention of the cotton-gin would give a new money-value to slaves, and generate a fanatical theory which glorified slavery as a precious institution. Hence without a terrible civil war the proud ambition of slave owners could not be crushed. But the mighty price was paid. Slavery in the Spanish and Portuguese colonies all now seems to be doomed. Simultaneously the Russian dynasty has reversed its policy. Having for several centuries by a gradual succession of imperial edicts depressed the peasants, first into serfs and next into slaves, it has raised them into free labourers who have legal rights in the soil and a *status* which the English peasant may envy. The most enlightened of the Mussulmans now glorify their Prophet as a promoter of freedom, a panegyrist of emancipation. In the judgment now of all highly cultivated men, slavery is an unnatural, unjust, dangerous institution, doomed by the voice of conscience, and suffrage of reason, to total extinction; though we grieve to know the perpetual effort which freebooters make, and will make, to renew it; not least, the degenerate offspring of Europeans, whenever they get beyond the reach of European law. But in the ancient world neither law nor philosophy nor religion forbade slavery; slightly to regulate its worst enormities,

was all that religion or law attempted. Slavery was with them not the exception, but the rule. No philosopher theorised against it, no philanthropist (if such we may call any Greek or Roman) was ashamed of it, no statesman dreamed of taking measures to destroy it. The savage who wandered over the steppes of southern Russia needed a slave to milk his mares, and blinded him lest he should escape. The Lacedæmonian warrior, proud of freedom, regarded public slaves as essential to his existence, important alike in the camp, on the field of battle, and in his own city. Even the simple and comparatively virtuous German, in his forest hut, coveted and often attained the attendance of slaves, whose status perhaps was rather that of a serf. To the leading commercial states, Tyre, Corinth, Ægina, slaves were a staple article of merchandise. Chattels they were, yet not in these days mere cattle, useful for their brute force and for little beside. They were often persons of greater accomplishment than their masters, and this accomplishment enhanced their price. Some persons kept schools of slaves, in which they learned music and other elegant arts, or arithmetic and bookkeeping, cooking and domestic service, or agriculture and its kindred branches; or some other trade; of course, not for the slaves' benefit, but to raise their marketable value.

Through the ferocities of war, the ancient slave trade raged most cruelly against civilised man. All captives from an enemy, however seized, became the booty of the captor and liable to personal slavery. Pirates even in peace prowled along the coasts, and often carried off as prey any promising children, handsome women, or stout men, on whom they could lay hands. In many cases, the same ship played the part of merchant and kidnapper, as occasion might serve. After the successful siege of an opulent town, it

was not uncommon for the entire population, young and old, of both sexes and of all ranks, to be sold into bondage: whereby sometimes the slave market was so glutted that they might be had for a trifle. It thus not seldom happened, that the well educated and delicately nurtured were degraded beneath humanity; and, dreadful as was the personal suffering to individuals, the result was in one sense more favourable to slaves collectively, than the very different state of modern colonial bondage. Slaves, as such, were less despised, and there was not so great a chasm as to moral feeling between them and the free community. The freeborn and instructed were probably better treated in slavery than others; and certainly were often set free by benevolent persons or by grateful masters. There was no prejudice against colour. In no two countries was the actual or legal state of slaves quite the same, and in some places and times the transition from slavery to unprivileged freedom was not very great. This may have been among the reasons which blinded thoughtful persons to the essential immorality of the system, however modified; yet it is wonderful that Aristotle should define a slave to be 'a living tool' (a phrase which one might expect rather from an indignant abolitionist), and not draw any inference against the system as inhuman. Nay, he says, that nature by giving to the Greeks minds so superior, marked out slavery to the Greeks as the natural status for barbarians. Barbarian Romans could not assent to this doctrine; yet no voice in all antiquity uttered an indignant protest against slavery as such. In one country only of the ancient world—a part, or some reported, the whole of India—was slave-labour said to be unknown. A species of slavery, serving some of the purposes of apprenticeship, may have existed then, as recently, without

being particularly noticed; so too may the practice of selling beautiful maidens to supply the harems of chieftains.

That Egypt, as well as India, should have dispensed with an ordinary slave class, was perhaps a natural result of the system of caste. Where a Pariah caste exists there is no want of men for any sort of rude or unpleasant labour, such as the Greeks believed none but slaves would undertake. The strength of domestic animals, aided by good roads, and, still more, modern machinery, relieves mankind from a thousand hard tasks, which the ancients exacted from the sinews of bondsmen. It is interesting here to observe by what process those oppressions are removed which weigh direfully on the lowest class of a civilised community. Even when Solomon built his celebrated little temple (about as large as an English parish church), for which cedars were cut in Mount Lebanon by aid of the skilful Tyrians, it was believed that he used 70,000 bondsmen that bare burdens, and 80,000 hewers of timber. No mention is made of mules or ponies to carry down the loads; even asses might better have borne the toil, if it had been matter of simple carrying on a clear path. Egyptian pictures represent vast weights as drawn by the hands of men, who tug simultaneously when the conductor sings or waves his wand. Shall we suppose that brutes, though stronger, could not be trained to the co-operation requisite? Be this as it may, the strain fell on human sinews. Hevers of wood and drawers of water are phrases often conjoined to express the suffering of bondsmen from causes which in the present day involve no kind of distressing toil. With us, if enormous masses of granite are to be moved along a prepared road, not even bullocks or horses are often thought in place, but the engineer supersedes them

by a steam-engine and one or more chains.

It is recorded that, when the Spaniards first learned the wealth of the American mines, their avarice pressed the unhappy natives so severely as to kill them in great numbers by the toil of ascending and descending the mines with heavy burdens. Of course, our most rudimental machinery immensely relieves or supersedes this. Yet, even to this day, a miner's life is so revolting to one who has not been, as it were, born and bred in it, that we cannot wonder at the ancient doubt whether any but a slave would work in a mine. For this purpose, criminals and prisoners of war were used by the Egyptians, which would seem to be the only form of slavery in that kingdom; and their labour is described as of the most galling cruelty. Whether the Indians had slaves in their mines, perhaps the Greeks were not well informed enough to ascertain. To labour in the dark, and underground, may appear to most of us an unbearable infliction, but modern experience proves that, by aid of machinery, it may be so lightened as to be chosen voluntarily for gain. To a thoughtful Athenian or Roman it may have seemed doubtful whether civilization was not purchased too dearly, for its maintenance was thought to require the permanent degradation of, perhaps, the majority of a nation into the unmanly and demoralising state of bondage. But this was an exaggeration, true only of a brilliant but luxurious and unsound state of society. In the simpler and earlier order of things, the labours of the field and workshop were performed by freemen; but, with the development of the military spirit, and owing to the small extent of a homogeneous native population, the freemen were drafted off for soldiers, and their place was supplied by captives of war. This undue predominance of military institutions, especially in

the Roman world, engendered and fostered *prædial* slavery. Under the Emperors, through the comparative cessation of wars and piracy, the slave-trade became far less active, and imperial legislation, in many ways, regulated the state of slavery, so that very great cruelties became rarer, and some exceptional forms of cruelty impossible; nevertheless, so much the more was a general grinding degradation riveted upon the masses of the country people. Such an idea as the common RIGHTS of MEN was nowhere sounded forth. What then was never heard is now an axiom, that all men, of every class, of every nation, of every complexion and climate, have some infeasible rights, which neither conquest nor legislation, nor sale by parents can take away. Herein lies an enormous difference between the past and future. Whatever the origin of human races, we now recognise all men as morally homogeneous, and, in a just state, subject to a single code of law. On the contrary, antiquity admitted the principle of favoured races, even among freemen. This may deserve a few detailed remarks.

II. The first step upward from slavery is into serfdom. Indeed the former always tends to merge itself into the latter, when the slave trade is inactive. If slaves can only be had from the natural home supply, the value of the workman immediately rises. It becomes at once the interest of the master, and the duty of the law-giver, to secure the due increase of the working population, and the maintenance of their full strength. In a tranquil society, developed only from within, this would secure the transition to serfdom, which is complete when families of labourers are inseparable from an estate. But besides the slaves and serfs, many ancient nations, great and small, recognised ranks very diverse, subject even to different systems of law. A ruling race was sure to be

a privileged order, whose liberties with the property or persons of others were ill-repressed by law; and of the rest, some were able to rise, others not; some without political rights, but endowed with full social rights; others treated as foreigners. The principle may be seen alike in despotic Persia, in oligarchical Lacedæmon and Rome; in part, also, in democratic Athens. In some sense it was superseded by a system of caste, where that existed, which by no means implied necessarily a primitive difference of race. But where an empire was founded by conquest of numerous cities and tribes, diverse in race and language, the distinction of race and race arose naturally, and was unblameable while the revolution was still recent. But meddling and jealous legislation endeavours to enact as a law for ever that which ought only to be a temporary caution of the executive government—a caution which the timidity of newly-seized power is never apt to neglect.

Since our renewal of the East India Company's Charter in 1833, the natives of India are by law put on a perfect equality with the British born, and were declared admissible to every office of power except *two*; that of Governor-General, and Commander-in-Chief. Yet every one knows how little danger there is that the executive will be too eager to fill up its appointments with born Indians. If, for security against this imaginary danger, it were forbidden by express laws, this would forbid the barriers which separate the conquered from the conquering race to decay with time; and if to this were added a law against intermarriage, it would exhibit anew the mischievous principles of exclusion, which have so often sustained the galling iniquities of conquest. It is a fallacy to insist that because some races of men have greater talents for government than others—even if the fact be conceded—therefore they

are entitled to award to themselves peculiar legal privileges and rights. A dominant race is never liable to think too highly of its subjects and too meanly of itself; the opposite error is uniformly that from which mankind has suffered. If the race which is in power has greater capacities, it will outstrip the rest in a fair field, without advantage from the law. Each individual has advantage already in the very name of his nation. But jealousies and pride in general prevailed. Most ancient empires split up societies into sharply distinguished orders of men; and as there was no sudden chasm, they were the less startled at the depth to which humanity was sunk in the unfortunate slave.

We have less reason for boasting than for mourning and contrition; for our practice is by no means commensurate with our theory; but European theory is now far more humane than that of the ancients. No high executive officer, no judge, no member of a high council, no authority in jurisprudence, will justify giving to the members of a ruling race any indefinite claims for service, facilities for oppression, or for evading rightful obligations. Whatever our difficulties in administering justice where a population is heterogeneous, we loudly and unshrinkingly avow our duty of abiding by and enforcing equal law. This, we may feel confident, will henceforth be the received principle of the modern world, wherever European influence has once been dominant. Those powers who fail of enforcing their own principle will not the less successfully indoctrinate the subject population with it, perhaps to their own overthrow; for to the enthroning of the idea of Equal Rights to all races, events are sure to gravitate, when the rulers themselves enunciate it; nor can men in power recede from a principle which all the intellect of their own nation proclaims and glorifies. This

is a great contrast between us and antiquity.

III. One may not pass by a topic closely akin to the last, although prudence forbids any great confidence of tone concerning a movement which is but in embryo. A cry arises, not only against depression of any Races, but also against the depression of one Sex. Every imperial power uses lavishly the lives of its young men as soldiers. Imperial England lavishes them also in emigration and in nautical dangers. Hence women have the toil of self-support, and, perhaps, the double toil of family support, thrown upon them; and in nearly every market it is discovered by them that their male rivals have unfair advantage. Hitherto women have suffered in silence, and with little interchange of thought. The novel fact is now, that in the freest countries the sex is the most loudly avowing discontent with its political depression. The movement already belongs to so many countries of Christendom, as to indicate that it is no transient phenomenon, but has deep causes. Partial success in so many places (as in the municipal franchise of England) is a promise that the movement must expand into greater force. Hitherto women of the higher ranks have often held executive power, directly as queens, or indirectly as mistresses of kings; or, again, as vice-regents, or representatives of barons and squires, their husbands; but women from the families of private citizens, who are the mass of every nation, have hitherto been utterly without political power, and rarely hold any subordinate public position, except the worst paid. In the American Union they have rebelled against this state of things for a full quarter of a century. The force of mind and grasp of knowledge which many women display in various spheres of thought, and not least in politics, are a fact which cannot count for nothing;

so that one who shuns to be rash may yet forebode that the countries which allow a political vote to uneducated men will not long refuse it to the mass of educated women. In this prospect we most surely see a remarkable and hopeful contrast of the Future to the Past, when it is considered how large a part of the miseries of history have arisen from the sensualities and cruelties of the male sex. Of course, we know that women, equally with men, can be corrupted by the possession of power, and can be exquisitely cruel; but this is rare, and somewhat abnormal. In general the sex is more tender-hearted and refined; and their collective exercise of power would forbid many a war, and be generally favourable to the side of humanity. But wishing here to speak rather of what is positively attained and recognisable by all minds, than of that which is only probable, I stay my pen from further remark on this topic.

IV. There is a signal contrast of *external circumstances* between the older and newer state of things herein; that nearly every ancient civilised state looked out upon a barbarism immeasurable in mass and power; barbarism, on which it could never hope to make a permanent impression, and by which it might well fear to be swallowed up. Tartary was the mightiest realm of Barbaria. Gibbon has eloquently and instructively detailed the causes which made the Tartars pre-eminently familiar with the art of campaigning and guiding the marches of immense hosts. At no time known to us can the Tartar nations have been so low in the scale of civilisation as numerous tribes whom we call savages. They always had an abundance of sheep and goats, and an extraordinary number of horses. They always had the art of mining for iron, and forging swords. Even the invention of steel was ascribed to north-

ern people, otherwise backward in civilisation. Waggon were brought to a high state of perfection, and over vast steppes of Tartary were able to traverse the open country without roads. This implies sufficiently good carpentry, and no lack of needful tools. The whole nation being moveable, it was hard to limit the magnitude of a Tartar army. The northern region could not be coveted by the southerners, and was practically unconquerable by them. It fell under their sway only when some Tartar dynasty conquered a southern people, and still retained the homage of its native realm. This has happened again and again with Tartar conquerors of China. At the earliest era of which we have notice of Persia from Greeks or Romans, it is manifest how powerful were the Tartar sovereigns who interfered in Persian domestic politics, when they did not affect direct conquest. This eternal conflict of the Tartars and the Persians is symbolised in the mythical Turân and Irân. In our mediæval period a Mogul dynasty seated itself in India, two successive dynasties of Turks, the Seljuks and the Ottomans, overwhelmed Asia Minor, and the existing dynasty of Persia is esteemed Tartar. Such is the peculiarity of *Asiatic* geography, that it may seem difficult to boast of civilisation being ever there safe from barbarism. Nevertheless the Tartar power is virtually broken by the wonderful development of Russian empire. Mistress of the Amoor, and exercising control over Khiva, Russia shuts the Tartars in on both sides, and teaches them the supremacy of civilised force in ways so intelligible, that no future sovereign of Tartary (if all were united under one chief) could fancy himself the chief potentate on earth. Southern nations are no longer palsied by the idea that their northern invaders are innumerable. Geography discloses their weakness as

well as their strength; even China has less to fear from Tartary than in ancient times.

But when we approach Western Asia and Europe, the contrast is far more marked and important. The Gauls, who temporarily overwhelmed Italy, and a century later, Greece, are described as an extremely rude people; so are the Scythians, whose cavalry was generally formidable to Persia, and to Rome. Even Germany, Hungary, and the regions south of the Danube, often threatened overthrow to the civilisation of their southern neighbours. Imperial Rome for several centuries stood at bay against the Germans, but could do little more; and when her best-informed men had begun to learn the intractable character and vast extent of the more or less closely related tribes, despair for civilisation was apt to seize them. Even under the splendid military reign of Trajan, conqueror of Dacia, the historian Tacitus, relating a war in which Germans slew one another, earnestly hopes that the gods will increase this fratricidal spirit, since 'the vates of the Empire pressing us hard' there is no better prayer to offer. Apparently he regarded it as inevitable that the savage would break the barriers of the Roman provinces and sweep away all culture before him; which, indeed, is the very thing which happened, through the essential error of Roman policy and the disorganizations incident to mere military rule.

If a civilised power can entirely subdue a barbarian neighbour, it may, at considerable expense, perhaps civilise him; but when the nature of the country forbids this, it is unwise in the more civilised to admit a common frontier. Augustus aspired to conquer Germany, and actually pushed the frontier of the empire to the Elbe, but the insurrection under Arminius drove him back to the Rhine; then at last he

learned that, through her swamps and forests and the wild nature of her people, Germany was not worth having, and that moderation is an imperial virtue. But Germany and the Empire were still conterminous, though the frontier was pushed back. The thing to be desired was to sustain between them—as a sort of buffer that should break German assault — a half-civilised high-spirited people, intelligent enough to estimate Roman power, proud of alliance and honours, but aware of its essential inferiority to the mighty Empire. Such a people, well armed and well supported by Roman resources, and taught all the arts of Roman war, would have been worth half-a-dozen armies; but to maintain in them a free spirit was essential to success, and this free spirit was dreaded by the Romans as contagious. Agricola planned to conquer Ireland (says Tacitus, who seems to approve the policy) lest the knowledge that the Irish were free should make the Britons less contented in vassalage. It was because the Romans systematically broke the spirit of every nation whom they conquered, and allowed of none but imperial armies, that the neighbour barbarians found no resistance in the provinces, when (from whatever cause) imperial troops were not at hand. Thus little good resulted to the world's history from the Roman conquest of the ruder populations of Gaul, or from the complete conquest of Britain and of Dacia. Even wild animals (says the Caledonian orator in Tacitus), if you keep them caged up, forget their courage. The Britons and the Dacians were not merely tamed; they were cowed and unmanned. To have subdued all Germany in this way would have been useless. Charlemagne at length undertook the problem, which had been too hard for Trajan and Marcus Antoninus; but he was already as much German as

Gaulish, and his chief struggle was against Saxony. The next great gain to civilisation was in Poland—in Hungary — and in Southern Russia. When Herodotus wrote, the whole region to the north of the Black Sea acknowledged the sovereignty of roving equestrian tribes; only agriculturists of foreign origin were settled among them in Podolia and in the Crimea, who paid them tribute. These, it may be conjectured, were the nucleus of the Ostrogoths, who afterwards appeared in great strength in that region, and from it migrated into the Roman empire. Other tribes filled the vacuum, but became agriculturists like the Goths; so that the Russians easily retained them under settled institutions. To Peter the Great, in the last century, we owe the establishment of the whole of European Russia as industrious people under well organised Governments. Even Siberia, along the high-roads which have been reclaimed from the interminable forests, has a settled population attached to its own soil and proud of its name. In the course of the last thousand years, in Mongolia itself, the same process has gone on, of restricting the limits of the roving tribes. In numbers they must now be ever inferior to the settled populations, and every development of the art of war throws them farther and farther behind. Much more is Europe secure from all alarms of the barbarian *from without*. Our dangers are solely when, by bad national institutions and selfish neglect of our home population, we allow barbarism to grow up from within.

V. Another contrast to be observed between the ancients and the moderns lies in the *number* of great states which have simultaneously attained a robust civilisation, no one of which is able to establish a universal dominion. This was for two or three centuries a cause of turbu-

lent yet thriving progress in Greece; but all the Powers were there on too small a scale to be able to resist the great monarchies. No doubt in China, in India, in Persia, civilised states on a grand scale existed simultaneously; but each was a separate world. Possibly in China and in India at an early time there was a complex internal struggle similar to those of which we know in Greece and in Europe; but as far as is recorded, the history of each great country went on independently of the other countries; just as the Roman and the Persian Empires, though conterminous, were little affected in their internal concerns, each by the other. Ancient freedom was generally on a small scale. According to Aristotle, no Polity could consist of so many as a hundred thousand citizens. A state with only so many, may be conquered by foreign force, in spite of wise policy and the utmost bravery; but to a homogeneous people of twenty or thirty millions this can only happen through the gravest domestic errors. In ancient times the attempt at widespread conquest was unhappily more and more prosperous as time went on. A succession of great empires is displayed before us, Assyrian, Median, Persian, Macedonian, Roman, each larger than the preceding. The last swallowed up into itself the whole cultivation of the West and much of its barbarism: each empire in its turn was practically isolated, independent and wholly self-willed, aware of no earthly equal. A victim of Roman tyranny scarcely had a hope of escaping into the remote Persia, any more than into the barbarous populations which girt the empire north and south. Under despotism thus uncontrolled, all that was manly and noble, all genius and all the highest art, with love of country, died away: the resources of civilisation were crumbling and sensibly declining, even during the century which produced the very

best Roman Emperors, Vespasian, Titus, Trajan, Hadrian and the two Antonines, before any Gothic inroad; hence, when the barbarian triumphed, what remained of the precious fabric fell as in a mass. But the rivalry of great powers in Europe effectively sustains all vital principles. Despotic and wilful as Russia may seem, she is really so anxious to secure the good opinion of Europe, that she does not disdain to subsidize foreign newspapers as her advocates. The dynasties collectively form a sort of European Commonwealth, which displays great jealousy if one make encroachments on another. Thus in their external action they encounter much criticism, remonstrance, or severer checks, and never think that they are irresponsible. Even as to their internal concerns, in which none will endure that another should interfere with diplomatic suggestion or advice, they cannot be exempt from the criticism of European literature. For in this greater Commonwealth there is in some sense a common literature. Modern languages more and more assume a form in which it becomes a determinate problem, and not an arduous one, to translate from one into the other. Through travellers, fixed embassies, and newspaper correspondents, an atmosphere of common knowledge is maintained, largely pervaded by a common sentiment, which, in proportion to the extent of education, inevitably affects the minds of public men. Moreover, in all the foremost states, and especially those in which despotism and bureaucracy predominate, a severe cultivation is thought necessary to high office. A despotism like that of Turkey, recent Naples or recent Spain, which accounts education to be needless for its functionaries, is understood to be decaying, and is despised by the other powers. So large a moral and mental action of state on state was unknown to antiquity. In it

we have a valuable guarantee for the maintenance and preservation of anything good which has been earned by civilised effort. In this connection we ought not to pass over the joint cultivation of science by all the leading nations of Christendom. The material sciences have emphatically become 'sinews of war' as well as means of wealth; so that no imperial power can despise them. Each great country has its peculiar objects or facilities of study, and what is discovered in one is studied and must be learned by others. Science is notoriously cosmopolitan, and steadily aids the diffusion of common thought and common knowledge upon which common sentiment may reasonably establish itself.

VI. We have not at all abandoned, scarcely have we relaxed, the rigid formalities by which imperial power seeks to elevate its high personages and maintain the steadiness of its ordinances. Nevertheless, with the stability of freedom under law, and the growth of a scientific spirit, criticism of national institutions becomes more and more fundamental, in a country so free as England. Hence it is scarcely credible that we can long continue to be, what we are, a marked exception to the rest of Christendom in regard to the tenure of land. So far as we know of antiquity, conquest and conquest alone, unmodified by considerations of moral right, enacted the landed institutions. Out of unequal rights in the soil, more than out of any other single cause, springs social depression to the excluded, and often a wide pauperism. In all Europe like causes produced like results, and nearly everywhere the actual cultivators of the soil were oppressed in various degrees; but time has in most countries largely altered their position for the better. In less than a hundred years an immense change has passed over the Continent. In Italy, Switzerland, and Spain, things were never

so bad as elsewhere, nor perhaps in Holland and parts of Germany. Norway retains a state of equality unbroken by conquest. France and Prussia, Hungary and Austria, Poland, Sweden, and Russia, have all endowed the peasantry with definite rights in the soil. Over the entire breadth of the Continent the principle has now established itself, which permits of arguing politically, as all will argue morally, that land, water, and air are gifts of God to collective man, necessary to life, and therefore not natural possessions of individuals, except as actual cultivators. Small states of antiquity, sometimes in favour of their own citizens (generally at the expense of another nation), avowed a doctrine of each family having a right to land: even this was exceptional. No doctrine concerning land was propounded by moral philosophy; no practical recognition of right in the cultivator, as such, was ever dreamed of by great imperial powers; no dogma concerning it was put forth by a hierarchy, even after a Christian apostle had written, that the cry of those who sow and reap the fields, whose hire the powerful keep back by fraud, had entered the ears of the Lord of Hosts. When moral philosophy deals with the question of property in land, as it already deals with that of property in human bodies, the effect on all civilised nations will be immense; and it is now pretty clear that such a development must come, and that shortly. The English aristocracy will shriek and storm, as did the American slaveholders. A Marquis lately spoke of certain landed property as sacred, *because* it had been sanctioned by Parliament. Just so, it was pleaded that slaves were a sacred property because they had been bought, and because slave owners had passed laws to sanction it. Such arguments are good enough for those who hold on by the law of might, but are contemp-

tible to all who appeal to the law of right. They avail to show that it is prudent and equitable in the state to give an ample consideration whenever it dispossesses an individual; but never can establish that it is right to keep a whole nation of cultivators living from hand to mouth, without any fixed tenure of the soil, without roof or hearth of their own, or increased profit from increased diligence in culture. If England were in this matter at the head of Europe, existing inequalities might last for centuries longer. But since she lingers ignominiously behind all the best known powers,—and while Ireland is her old scandal, the Scottish and English peasants have no better security whatever in their tenure, and are accidentally superior, chiefly through manufacturing and commercial wealth—since, moreover, the English colonies entirely renounce that doctrine of land which English landlords have set up,—finally, since in India the supreme power avows and enforces a widely different doctrine; the existing system is destined to a fundamental change. Precisely because those who claim reform feel towards the landlord class as tenderly as abolitionists felt towards slave-owners—making all allowance for their false position blamelessly inherited,—desiring to make the change as gentle to them as public justice will permit; therefore the more decisive and unhesitating is the appeal to moral principle in the political argument. In this resolute appeal to morals is involved a great contrast to the state of things possible in any ancient power, where slavery, serfdom, or caste existed. A claim of landholders which rests on the enactments of a Parliament from which all but landholders were systematically excluded for centuries, is signally destitute of moral weight. They who use it do not know that they are courting contempt. Unless they will undertake

to establish that the claim is morally just, they effect nothing but to show that, having stepped into legislative power, they have used it for their private benefit; while, by excluding all but their own order, they betrayed their own consciousness of malversation. This, in part, relates to past generations, but, of course, the alleged rights are hereditary only. The evil deeds of predecessors have wrongfully enriched the present holders. In every case, it is by moral argument that they will have to be established, if established they can be, against the *consensus* of all Europe, the American Union, the other British colonies, and the Anglo-Indian empire.

VII. Last, perhaps not least, of the general moral contrasts which will make a signal difference between the ancients and the moderns, is the elementary education of the masses of every community. This education, no doubt, is as yet chiefly in the future. In the late American civil war the 'mean whites' of the South were so ignorant that only by seeing and feeling the force of Northern armies could they learn that there was any greater power in the world than their own State. Germany and the American Union having declared for, and vigorously carried out, the education of the lowest people, it is morally certain that first England, next Austria and France, will follow. Partial interests, religious animosities, old prejudices, timid forebodings, will impede, but can only delay, the movement; though a century may be needed before it is strictly European. When it is established that there are to be no slaves, no serfs, no dangerous class of citizens, the problem cannot be worked out with the vast masses of ignorant freemen. Hence general national education is one of the certainties of the future. It is the last contrast of modern and ancient times which it is expedient to treat in one article.

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