

THE SECRET OF HISTORY

No Progress without Freedom.

“Just as in geological speculation great diluvial catastrophes have been eliminated and replaced by the action of existing forces operating during enormous periods of time, so the prehistoric archæologists are increasingly disposed to substitute slow progress in culture for the other theories which cut every knot by theories of conquest and invasion. Civilisation, which we find in Europe at the beginning of the historic period, was gradually evolved during a vast period of time, and was not introduced cataclysmically by the immigration of a new race.”

Canon Taylor's conclusion is amply established, but it is necessary to remember that while civilisation is of slow growth upon the whole, there have been periods when progress has been made at a greater rate than at other times, and periods again during which decay has suddenly set in, so that instead of progress retrogression took place.

The progress of civilisation may be likened to the advancement of a yacht under sail, which speeds along in the breeze. The pilot on board, representing society, is an amateur. He steers the yacht too dangerously near the wind, and brings her to a standstill. In technical parlance, the little vessel is in “irons.” If the pilot is slow to learn, he may be driven ashore upon the rocks of anarchy, and may have to refit.

The yachtsman does not retain freedom to progress by giving way to violent panic or by refusing to learn from experience. To preserve himself he must act in accordance with certain immutable principles or so called laws of Nature.

The freely running steam engine, quiet and efficient, provides little scope for unilluminated comment, but the

enlightened mind finds a never-failing source of pleasurable interest in it.

If, however, the engine, having been erected upon a defective foundation which had therefore subsided, was out of alignment and strained, so that owing to friction in the moving parts it was almost "scotched," and steam leaked from every joint, no one but a crazy person would find satisfaction in the spectacle.

The scientific engineer would not try to remedy matters by pouring sand into the bearings, nor would he add weights to the safety-valve of the boiler for the purpose of increasing steam-pressure to overcome the abnormal resistance. He would instead lay down a sound foundation, and make adjustments which would have the effect of liberating the mechanism.

What would be thought of a professor or teacher of mechanics if he assessed the power and efficiency of a steam engine according to the loud groans it made, the shrieks of escaping steam, and the heat and smoke of strained bearings? Yet it is according to a similar assessment that many makers of history books have measured the usefulness of a social system!

History, as ordinarily written, is full of the indelectable scandals and crimes of unromantic royalty. It is rarely that reference is made to principles, but its pages overflow with accounts of the sordid intrigues of the Court supermen and women and the predatory diplomacies of scrambling States, each imbued with a belief that it is making the world safe for itself by making it unsafe for all others.

It would appear as though the pretentious warlords and the preachers of "firm" government had filled their protégés, the professors and lecturers of history, with awe-struck admiration. The latter seem to regard the hot vapourings of war and civil commotion, which are not evidences of progress but simply signs that the advancement of society is being checked, as manifestations of creative effort. In reality these activities are the death-struggles of a culture which is being disrupted by the stresses and strains set up owing to the retention of decaying and obsolete social institutions.

No progress is possible without freedom.

The Secret of History.

"There is a Secret of History. The *mot de l'énigme* is Land. The great historians of the rank, for instance, of Mommsen, say the word, but then pass on, as though in haste to leave a dangerous ground. Lesser historians shun the mention of it altogether, or mention it in faltering accents. Time, with its effacement of old meanings, helps this obscurantism, and oblivion falls upon the theme." (Dr. F. W. G. Foat.)

One is tempted to ask if there had been a conspiracy of silence, or if an undertaking had been entered into to treat so fundamental a matter contemptuously, as of little account, and to conceal its importance by discussing instead unreal problems in language that is unintelligible.

When explanation is sought for the sacrifice of the brave soldiers who save the community momentarily from the worst consequences of social folly, or when a reason is asked for the surgings and insurgings of nations, collateral and intermediate causes are put forward, such as man's natural pugnacity, notions of honour, wild aspirations towards political liberty, "human nature being what it is. . . ."

The Revolutions of Civilisations.

The Revolutions of Civilisations is the title of a book by Mr. Flinders Petrie, the eminent Egyptologist, in which by means of pictures and diagrams he illustrates in a vivid manner the rises and falls of cultures during the historical period.

Possessing no knowledge of the Secret of History, Mr. Petrie has recourse to the discredited theory that an infusion of fresh barbarous blood by means of invasion is necessary for the purpose of revivifying a decadent civilisation. Mr. Petrie then speculates that, the zenith of progress having passed, decay sets in unless a new infusion of a similar sort is given.

Although appearances at first sight may seem to favour such a view, the facts of history are not in support of this theory.

Habits and customs, which in course of time have been petrified into legalised injustice, have sometimes been disturbed by the beneficial interference of new-comers, which

suspended or modified the harmful ordinances, and thus afforded a spurt of progress. But a similar effect has been produced by the expulsion of intruders, as when the Egyptians expelled the Hyksos, and this very fact cuts out the theory subscribed to by Mr. Petrie.

The realities of history begin to arrange themselves logically in the mental purview when progress is regarded as a product of association in freedom, and impedance the consequence of parasitic growth within the community.

The European Civilisation.

Past European civilisations were more heterogeneous than those of the Nile and Mesopotamia, and they have escaped, sometimes narrowly, the development of that extreme despotism which turned men out of rigid moulds like bricks, destroying all individuality. Again the student in his survey of them sees evidences of new attempts made to evolve a "rule of the land" which will ensure freedom of action for the individual, bounded only by the like freedom of others.

Self-interest is the most powerful inducement to progress, and the student learns that in adventitiously affording free and equal opportunity to the play of this motive, men cooperate voluntarily to their mutual advantage and achieve real progress in civilisation. On the other hand, he discovers that in seeking to restrain forcibly the freedom of individuals composing them, communities bring about dissociation in which all progress comes to an end and in which retrogression may take place.

He is confirmed in the belief that any economic or mechanical device of oppression sets up an intolerable strain in human affairs, and that war and civil commotion are thereby rendered inevitable.

The Age of Uranus.

Private ownership of the person developed in pastoral times, and it existed in Europe as a variable quantity when men began to till the soil. Excepting where war had become a slave-raiding and plundering business, the slavery was mild, and often amounted to wardship in trust to the patriarchal leader.

Life at the beginning of the Heroic Age of the Hellenes is marked by simplicity and cheerfulness of manners. Music, including games, dances, poetry and the drama, was part of the daily life of the people. There was no poverty, although methods of tillage must have been primitive. Intemperance and disease were rare or unknown, and the early Grecian ideal, which persisted long, was great physical and mental beauty.

There was none of that mutilation of the person, either in bravado or for punishment, which distinguishes tribes that have carried slavery of the person to an extreme length.

It was at a much later period that the Spartan descendants of Dorian invaders offered boys as human sacrifices to the goddess Artemis, of icy and exaggerated virginity.

The priest-kings, gentry or nobles were proud of their manual skill. The hero Ulysses, who boasted of his agricultural knowledge, made his own household furniture. Their wives and daughters assisted the slaves in household duties, fetching water from the well and washing garments in the river. These women, of whose charm poets have sung and whose beauty artists have striven to render immortal, were skilled in household refinements, which flourish best in an environment of happiness. They excelled in weaving, spinning and embroidery.

Polygamy, always a sign of debased custom associated with personal captivity, was not practised at the dawn of Grecian history. The status of the woman was high, as in the earliest period of Egyptian history.

At the time of which we write, fighting was confined to the nobles and gentry, the supporters or clients being interested spectators only. In later times, when retainers took part, a single hero might put hundreds of the combatants, probably possessing no weapons to speak of, to flight. There was no serious bloodshed, and battles were like Irish fairs.

The History of Greece is the Epitome of that of Europe.

The history of ancient Hellas and the adjoining coasts is an epitome of what subsequently took place in Europe as a whole. Possessing the same religious beliefs and a language much the same everywhere, healthy co-operative emulation between different localities was gradually transformed and

intensified until small States of about the size of English counties were fighting a life-and-death struggle with each other for dominion.

From time to time competing States joined issue against a similar league, and when opposing leagues exhausted themselves in bitter strife, a third entered, which took advantage of their plight and took revenge for some past depredation. Even when all the States were the slaves of some league, there was no durable peace. To avoid civil and factional outbreaks, recourse had to be made to imperialistic conquest for the purpose of taking attention away from domestic affairs. These ambitions invariably ended in disappointment.

Early Land Custom in Europe.

It is probable that the oldest land system in Europe was the allodial sharing of pasture commons with the use for a portion of the year of strips of arable land for each tribesman. This system of land tenure did not permit of great agricultural progress, because individual enterprise was discouraged by the yearly disturbance caused by casting lots and a redistribution, but the system possessed rude virtue, and persisted for a very long period, existing as communal tenure within the feudal system, which came later.

The Aryan tribes, settled on the northern shores of the Mediterranean, possibly as a result of contact with the older civilisations of Troy, Mycenæ and Egypt, evolved a tribal custom in land, similar to the feudal system in its infancy. It was the kind of cross one might expect in the principle of fixed tenure wedded to the allodial system, in which there is no private property in natural resources. This transitional system, until corrupted by the superstition that land can be bought and sold, has everywhere and at all times produced remarkable results in the progress of those living within it. Its advantages may even be seen at the present day among the Kaffirs and the natives of Northern Nigeria, where it is slowly being deteriorated, owing to the influence of European corruption.

The land was held in trust by the priest-king, or tribal leader, and freemen, by paying homage to him as representa-

tive of the clan, were apportioned holdings, which they could not buy or sell, but which reverted to the trust in the event of death or upon leaving the neighbourhood. The tribesmen were given self-determination with regard to methods of cultivation, and retained the products of their labour, free to keep, to give away, and to exchange with others for services and kind.

Tribes combining pastoral pursuits on commons with agriculture allodially were far in advance of the wandering pastoral nomads, but the Hellenes, by means of the new land settlement, made advancement in civilisation which outranged either. It was not that they were in any way a "wonderful people" or inherently superior to their neighbours, only that the partial temporary economic freedom enabled them to apply their intelligence to better advantage, in other words, to become more scientific.

How Peers become Tributaries.

Presents in direct labour and kind to the chief were probably made voluntarily at the start, and the leader would feel he should make return in some way to his clan or clients, who would feast with him, and enjoy in equality his hospitality and counsel. Around him would centre the social life, in which the women and children would occupy a large part, and neighbouring clans, or *phratræ*, into which the tribes were divided, would and did co-operate for larger functions.

It is easy to imagine why the philosophers and poets of later days looked back with regret to this simple and happy period, which they called the Aristocratic or Golden Age.

It would seem natural for the holder of a piece of ground in a better position to be more munificent than a freeman holding a less advantageous site in point of fertility and other features, but there would be no standard measure of contribution. All men were not freemen, and the chief "controlled" the disposition of the lands at whim. The slaves were well treated, and frequently given their freedom as a reward for loyalty, but the mild slavery had its due effect upon the developing institutions. The law of rent would be obscured, because, apart from the communal value of a holding, the number of slaves a freeman possessed

would affect the determination of his contribution to the noble, who occupied the position of trustee for his peers.

The absence of any just measure, and the fact that favouritism and bribery would therefore have room to develop, would lead to a desire for some compulsory form of assessment. In ignorance of a better way, the contributions, as in ancient Egypt, were made upon the basis of "ability to pay." There was thus no natural limit to the proportion to be contributed by the landholder, nor a corresponding limit to the proportion to be returned to the *phratry* by the chief. The tithe was simply an income tax or tax upon production, and the gentry, actuated by self-interest unregulated, made it as high as possible.

We do not doubt that the freemen, also actuated by self-interest, resisted imposition as well as they could; but so long as there is no competitive or economic limitation, users of land are at the mercy of arbitrary "controllers," who, from being public servants, by the growth of corruption from lack of automatic regulation, inevitably become public masters. The rate of tribute was increased as the mania of owing things took possession of the gentry, and the spirit of unrest and discontent entered into ancient Hellas.

It is at this stage that a change takes place in the function of leadership. The leader of the community must undertake the stern duty of repressing the growing turbulence of the citizens of the little State, and he can no longer himself remain chief-priest, and possibly principal poet and oracle or councillor. There is an inevitable differentiation, and the spirited ruler makes his appearance, accompanied by persons fulfilling these functions in an especial way. This polity was called by Socrates, in Plato's *Republic*, the timocracy or timarchy, the government of honour, in which duels take place and the beginnings of warfare.

The Grecian Mythology.

Not seeing the relationship between cause and effect in the unpleasant developments, it was natural for wisdom to be depraved by vanity into cunning. Enclosure in economic slavery had its usual baneful influence upon the Grecian religion, decomposing it into superstition. There is a great temptation to distort the truth, when that is

effective for a while in stilling unrest. Some justification had to be invented to account for the growing number of atrocities now taking place. Wrapped up in the Grecian mythology there is preserved a distorted reflection of the early history of Hellas.

While the Egyptian and Chaldean metaphysical speculations were founded upon a geometrical basis—the triune measure of the universe—the Grecian system was founded upon a biological plan of progressive growth.

In pastoral ages fetishes, such as sacred trees, belemnites, or meteoric stones were objects of superstitious regard. Uranus in the oldest literature of the Greeks designated only the physical vault of heaven, and there is reason for thinking that in emancipating themselves from the earlier Aryan superstitions, and prior to the appearance of the new land-slavery, the Hellenes were in process of forming a reasonable credence in the oneness of Nature.

About the time of Hesiod, Uranus was personified, and became the spouse of Gæa, representing earth. It was a logical consequence that they had children, and of these Cronus, god of time, and his sister Rhea, goddess of the earth, were married. Of their children, Zeus and Hera became supreme rulers of Olympia, the older deities being relegated to inferior positions as decrepit generations.

The system was still further extended as the dispossessed younger children of each generation of deities had irregular unions and issue with the children of men, and even with animals. The aberrated superorganic environment of the ancients became crowded with gods, goddesses, titans, cyclopes, gigantes, furies, demigods, heroes, geniuses, nymphs, phantoms and monsters, in all totalling about thirty thousand.

These divinities were believed to take part in the affairs of men, and at the same time to engage in struggles for supremacy among themselves. Their absurd behaviour and childish antics, preserved in the ancient poems and legends, are remarkable examples of oblique imagination, and give a kaleidoscopic reflex of what took place among the blindfolded Hellenes in their struggles for freedom.

Among the Dorians, the timocracy quickly developed into an oligarchy, only those possessing property having political power, and it is interesting to note that the Dorian

States were the last to adopt a more democratic constitution. In Laconia the inward divisions were smothered by militarism, and every attempt was made to save the citizens from the anarchy prevailing in the surrounding States by means of a rigorous system of schooling and discipline.

Having quenched for a while internal dissension, the Dorians proceeded to prey upon their neighbours. The Spartans, who were descended from the Dorians, carried predatory methods yet further, and their success led them to believe that it was more honourable to steal and plunder from neighbours than to work themselves and exchange fairly. In Sparta it was thought no crime to rob, but it was considered disgraceful to be caught doing so.

The characters of the patron deities accorded well with the changing credence of the devotees. Apollo, the patron of the Dorians, associated with the muses and representing the arts and sciences, was gradually transformed after the Heroic period from this benevolent conception into a cruel, jealous and suspicious deity.

The goddess, Artemis, of chastity and hunting, sister of Apollo and adopted by the Spartans as their patron, changed from an accredited character of healthy and virile maidenhood into a vampire thirsting for male blood. Upon her altar boys were offered as human sacrifices or flogged until the blood flowed. The Spartan mother took a gloomy pleasure in the repression of natural feelings and the obliteration of all human affection. Everything was subordinated to the supposed welfare of the State. With every neighbour hostile, the hardy Spartan spent most of his time in "preparedness," and despised learning as unworthy of a warrior.

In the states of Attica there was a temporary escape from the economic pressure of necessity in the rapid development of shipping and commerce overseas. This leakage in the enclosure bewildered the oligarchical rulers, and the application of the written code of Draco resulted in civil commotion, which was soon beyond their power to suppress. The labours of Solon, and later of Clisthenes, bore fruit in the institution and the transient quietude of a pseudo-democracy.

Political liberty set free a wave of progressive thought, which transformed the accredited character of the patron

goddess Athena. She was believed to have issued from the head of Zeus with a great war-shout, clad completely in armour and supplied with a sword. This goddess, formerly so warlike, afterwards became so changed in attributes that she was adopted as the patron of all the peaceful arts and trades. As the protectress of women, she was supposed to confer upon them skill in spinning and weaving.

How the Lot of the Labourer becomes Harder.

The freemen were easily persuaded that the increasing rate of taxation was required in order to uphold the honour of the gods, and the nobles and priests especially attached to the worship of a particular deity strove to direct the oblations of the people seeking for divine favours to the glory of their patron, and incidentally to the aggrandisement of themselves. So long as it was remembered that the property of the gods was in trust for the people, the gentry were self-denying and did not consume luxuriously.

It is a matter of common observation, however, that the memory of the multitude, which "pulls wool over its eyes," soon fails. The zealous trustees awaited with patience the time when they could assume possession and afterwards ownership of the public revenue, to dispose of it as they willed.

The Hellenes were not dumb driven cattle, and discontent frequently broke out into rebellion, but not seeing the light, the blindfolded mobs only struggled with and fought each other, ever losing more and more liberty as they drew the toils in upon themselves. Armed force to keep themselves in order was increased after each outbreak, for the support of which more taxation had to be imposed. The burdens increased at a rapid rate, because the ranks of the producers of wealth were depleted to fill the ranks of the custodians and soothsayers. The latter were non-producers, but they were heavy consumers.

The free labourers or *thētes* for a time put forth increased effort, hoping thereby to keep up their standard of living. Unaware that the presence of pressed labour operated disadvantageously in the long run for all men, the *thētes* exhibited little sympathy for the helots or serfs, who, in proportion as they were driven by hard masters, became

more efficient. Half a man's worth, said Homer, is taken away on the day he becomes a slave.

The land fell increasingly out of cultivation, and the necessities of life became scarcer in spite of "mass production" and longer hours. The cost of living therefore advanced, and the free labourers, along with freemen possessing portions of land, suffered with the helots. Any benefit the freemen received from increased exertion was only temporary in effect.

But while the plight of the "working classes" became worse, the nobles, skilled in violence, and the soothsayers, excelling in cunning, became rich and powerful. The competition for their privileged places grew keen and furious. It was no wonder that the "art" of war and the "science" of metaphysics developed at a greater rate than the sciences of production and exchange—that, blinded by appearances, the dazzled mob thought it more honourable to kill and plunder than to cultivate and trade fairly.

Along with disappointment and discontent, disease and crime became prevalent.

The Development of Factions and "Powers."

In each *gens* the heads of families struggled for supremacy, and the nobles fought for place in the *phratry*, while the successful hero became king of the tribe. The prizes having been won by violence and cunning within the State, it was "thinking imperially" to extend the process: "War," says Clausewitz, "is only an extension of policy"!

The Hellenes, ignorant of the true cause of social evils, attributed them to the capricious actions of the gods and other supernatural beings, or in default blamed each other. Failing an outlet for their feelings of hatred within the family, *gens*, *phratry* or tribe, the emotion was directed against other tribes as the cause, or at any rate as the means of easing their own burden. Any small incitement was enough to start off hostilities. Thus it fell that to subjugate neighbouring tribes, making them also pay tribute to the greater honour of the patron deity or the tribal oracle, was a sacred duty. Tribes were thus welded into States under central masters, as, for example, kings, ephors or oligarchies.

But the hostility of families and factions was not thereby abated, nor were factions confined within tribal or other limits. In Attica the factions of the Mountain, the Plain and the Shore disturbed the public peace, while the city of Athens was crowded with slaves and impoverished freemen in a perpetual state of party tumult. Discouraged freemen fell into debt, borrowing from the nobles at heavy interest upon the security of their land and persons. Land therefore got into fewer and fewer hands, freemen and their children were frequently sold as slaves to barbarian masters, life and property were insecure, and each egoism tried to repair its own estate at the expense of every other.

The Effect of Niggardly Production.

If at a daily feast of ten persons there is invariably enough for eleven, an association springs up in which the exchange of the good things upon the table is seen to be beneficial to all. Consequently there is no selfish monopoly: all assist each other, men are chivalrous to women, and the children have their due share and attention.

But if day by day the provisions, for some reason undiscerned, are diminished, these good relations tend to disappear, and when there is only enough for nine people, mothers stint themselves for their children, while persons with little self-control selfishly attempt to monopolise the necessities of life. The exchange of things upon the table in these circumstances is regarded with suspicion.

The supply continuing to fall off, there inevitably comes a time when there is, say, only enough food prepared for five or six hungry people. Even the children are neglected at length, and men, ceasing to be considerate to their weaker companions, fight each other for the acquisition of power, scattering and wasting the food in their battles.

Under the rule of a tyrant, rationing for a while may palliate such a condition of affairs, but this is no permanent remedy. Poverty continuing to creep in upon them, necessity cannot longer be contained, and harmonious relations break down before commotion. The last survival of association is that honourably preserved between thieves robbing in concert.

Here we have a fair picture illustrating what took place as economic conditions became gradually worse for the Grecian States, due to the land, the source of wealth, becoming monopolised by the few. Land everywhere fell out of cultivation in proportion as the labourer was robbed of the fruits of his labour.

The League of States.

The process of alienation was accelerated as each tribe went to war, seeking to dominate the other. Free husbandmen of conquered territory were frequently converted into inefficient landless helots upon their own holdings, and victors returning home often found themselves heavily mortgaged and their fields neglected.

To escape from a life which got harder, many wealth-producers, characteristically called "redundant population" by the history books, migrated to the independent cities as artisans, shipwrights and sailors, where they flooded the labour market. This had the effect of depressing the wages of all hired men, and it further caused wealth-distribution to grow more uneven. The merchant princes became very rich and powerful, and the *thētes* were only free in name.

The unrequited freemen then sought new homes amid freer surroundings in Africa, Italy, Sicily and Spain, where they founded colonies. But since the colonists did not leave behind the system of tribute to the State based upon "ability to pay," they duly produced for themselves conditions similar to those obtaining in the mother States. The trading monopolists handed down their taxes in higher prices upon the consumers.

Commercial jealousies then sprang up between the colonies and the mother cities. Enraged by poverty and unemployment, the cause of which was hidden from them, each independent State failed to see that the competition to serve consumers everywhere by exchange was really co-operation, and that trading was carried on between ports because it was mutually advantageous.

Attempts were continually being made by Corinth, Athens, and Ægina to establish monopolies. It was imagined by each egoism that in some mysterious way it could secure freedom and prosperity for itself by destroying competitors

who were also customers. The oldest naval battle recorded in Grecian history was fought between the trading fleets of the island Corcyra and the mother city of Corinth (B.C. 664).

Just as the hostile political parties were coalitions of democratic and aristocratic elements, so "balances of power" were formed of the jealous cities and States of ancient Hellas. A Lacedæmonian group, with Sparta as a nucleus, supported by the naval might of the Æginetans, opposed one centred round Attica, supported by the Athenian fleet. Slim States like Thebes remained outside the leagues, watching for opportunities to prey upon necessity. But open hostilities were delayed by the invasion of Greece by Persia, in revenge for the depredations of Athenians and Asiatic Greeks in Asia Minor.

The opposing leagues combined to repel the invaders, but as evidence of the temporary nature of the bond, sedition broke out soon after the battle of Marathon between Athens and Ægina, the rivals only reconciling their differences when Greece was invaded again by the Persians under Xerxes. The most remarkable fact with regard to the invasion was that although the Persians took Athens and occupied the country, they were quite unable to enslave the Athenians, whose freer institutions were beyond their understanding. Failing to discover any channel in the decentralised democracy by which to exploit the population, they were forced to return whence they came. Demoralised by famine and pestilence, they left an army of occupation, reinforced by Grecian allies, mainly Thebans, but it was defeated with tremendous slaughter by one-third the number of Hellenes.

After the expulsion of the Persians, a great league of States, combining the Spartan and Athenian groups, was formed, called the "Confederacy of Delos," in which each State was assessed, and compelled to pay a tribute in money or ships. Intended by Aristides as a protection against foreign attack, the confederacy was employed by the militarists as a powerful instrument to enslave the States. When tributaries revolted, they were subjugated by the remainder, disarmed, and made passive slaves of the central power situated in Athens.

Imperialism comes before a Fall.

Following the pirate and the freebooter's maxim, "Let him keep who hath the power, and let him take who can," powerful Athenians in the Government allotted to themselves lands in the islands and territories enjoying the "protection" of Athens. This does not, of course, mean that the magnates intended to till or to use the land themselves. It meant that they had discovered a means of extorting tribute from the citizens of the lands as rent.

For such brigandage Themistocles, who had been foremost in Athenian "preparedness," was banished by the electorate, who afterwards discovered that he had been carrying on a treasonable correspondence with the Persians.

After the death of Aristides, the subjugation of revolted tributaries led to further scandals on the part of magistrates, to so great an extent that it was found impossible, in the then knowledge of political economy, to deal with the offenders. Moreover, these absentee landlords of the islands, living in Athens and suffering much abuse from the envious Spartans, were idolised by the ignorant Athenian mob. The latter were dazzled by the magnificence of successful robbery, and were easily deluded into the belief that in some way they also benefited. A rude shock awaited them.

The hatred and malice of the Lacedæmonians were not lessened because they had their own difficulties. Their oppressed helots were in a continual state of disaffection, and they were offended because of the seeming prosperity of their rivals. The Athenians, on their part, had not forgiven the Spartans for their abrupt dismissal when they went to assist the latter in subduing the rebellious helots.

Against the great league of States there were fast building up feelings of hostility among the Lacedæmonian or Peloponnesian group. It only required a spark to light the combustible material composing the Confederacy of Delos, which had its headquarters at Athens.

Imperialism may be likened to the quarrelsome busy-body who, leaving her own ill-managed and disorderly hearth, proceeds, highly motivated by feelings of false virtue, to show her neighbours across the way how to settle their differences. The interference of the Athenians in the quarrel between Corinth and its colonists of the island of

Corcyra was the irritating incident which started the long Peloponnesian wars.

The Struggle for Supremacy.

It is not remarkable, knowing the hidden fundamental cause of the strife, that the struggle lasted off and on for twenty-seven years without satisfaction for either side. The material strength of the opposing forces was fairly well-balanced, and neither side possessed any advantage in a moral count. Each sought only to dominate the other for parasitical reasons.

Sometimes Sparta predominated, and at other times the Athenians got the better. When in an exhausted condition a truce was declared, a consuming desire for revenge soon brought it to an end. The belligerents were struggling within a vicious circle of superstition, unable to see that fighting was moral cowardice and only made matters worse.

The rulers of Athens relied upon imports of food by sea, which supply proved insufficient for the needs of the citizens, swelled in numbers as they were by the addition of the country people of Attica. The walled city was found to be a death-trap instead of a refuge.

Reduced by famine and captivity, the incarcerated population fell easy victims to a plague or gaol fever, which especially attacked their mental faculties and for which the physicians had no remedy. Instead of attributing the calamity to imprisonment, the Athenians blamed everything else. Some said it came from the wells, believed to have been poisoned by the Peloponnesians, others that it was communicated by infection from Africa and Asia, where other overcrowded plague spots were known to exist, while many said that the blight was due to the anger of Apollo, the patron god of their rivals.

Insanity and death followed upon the despondency of the afflicted prisoners, and survivors in despair abandoned themselves to all manner of excess, debauchery and crime. The numbers carried off by the pestilence far exceeded those slain in battle. It was estimated that not less than one-fourth of the whole population died from disease.

Exasperated by misfortune, the Athenians vented their feelings of dissatisfaction upon their leaders. The enraged

multitude, deaf to reason, could only hear the demagogue who was most capable of interpreting to them their frenzied imaginings. Pericles' moderation and zeal were outshone by the blatant leather-seller Cleon, who appealed to the worst passions of the mob, while Alcibiades was a fitting leader for the privileged classes.

As the war advanced hatred burnt ever fiercer. All feelings of humanity were sacrificed to ruthlessness and frightfulness. In her fearful extremity Athens visited with greater violence any State which revolted from the alliance or which wished to remain neutral than she did the Lacedæmonians, and the latter, as a reprisal, had no mercy upon the survivors of any Ionian city falling into their hands.

In Corcyra the democratic party sided with Athens and the aristocratic party with Sparta. A life-and-death struggle took place, in which the most sacred sanctuary afforded no protection and the nearest ties of blood and kindred were sacrificed to civil hatred. In one case a father even slew his own son.

After the shameful violation of the Peace of Nicias, when an island or city was taken by siege or blockade, it frequently happened that the males were mercilessly slain in cold blood, while the women and children were sold into slavery to purchase provisions for the Athenian fleet or the starving city.

Such a war could not end by agreement to live and let live. The complete subjugation of one side by the other and a certainty of future violence was the only termination possible. In the end the Spartans gained the Dead Sea fruit of victory.

Short-lived Empire.

After the fall of Athens the unstable rule of the Thirty Tyrants was established by the Spartan Lysander following a reign of terror. Other cities were controlled by oppressive governors, who possessed almost absolute power. Many thousands of Greeks, with skill only in the art of war, sought employment with the Persians, who had assisted the Lacedæmonians against the Athenians, and they were joined by many more who tired of the Spartan tyranny. The

main result of the never-ending wars was the deepening enslavement of the commoners.

The ascendancy of the Spartans only lasted thirty years, and we do not propose to weary ourselves, because the purpose has been served, by recalling in detail how the Thebans entered in upon the scene and made an alliance with their ancient enemies the Athenians, becoming supreme masters of the Hellenes, and retaining their position even when the fickle Athenians supported the Spartans. Nor how Greece, prostrated by dissensions, became the slave of Philip of Macedon, whose son Alexander the "Great" conquered Persia and Egypt and invaded India.

The Deceitfulness of Appearances.

The Athens of Pericles in 448 B.C. was at the height of her glory, but the hectic flush of seeming prosperity, that enraptures the superficial historian, was not of health, but of approaching dissolution.

The democracy, wonderful achievement though it was, was not founded upon justice, the nature of which was hidden from the Hellenes. Did not the personification of Dice or Justice, who was armed with a sword, lose her sight? It was fitting that in such a State licence should be con-founded with liberty and insolence with equality; that men should ruminare unsteadily, "Shall I by justice or by crooked wiles climb to a loftier stronghold, and, having thus fenced myself about, live my life?"

Equal political rights, such as they were, could not take the place of equal opportunity to the resources of Nature. Coexisting with the increasing tendency to unequal wealth-distribution and the attendant niggardly production, equal political rights were doomed to result in anarchy and despotism.

That the Hellenes, and especially the Athenians, became vain, ferocious and fickle, was not due to some imperfection inherent in their nature; it was simply because their minds were deranged gradually in consequence of captivity due to non-observance of the Golden Rule in social institutions. They did not see where they had gone astray, but fancied, among other things, that their misfortunes were due to the caprice of the gods.

Consequently, they believed that the gods might be turned from their purpose by the supplications of men. Said their greatest poet:—

Yea, even the gods do yield to entreaty ;
Therefore to them men offer both victims and meek supplications,
Incense and melting fat, and turn them from anger to mercy,
Sending up sorrowful prayers when trespass and sin is committed.

Iliad, ix. 497.

Like the priesthood of the present day, the soothsayers of ancient Greece persuaded men that they could be absolved and purified from crimes, both while they were still alive and even after death, by means of certain sacrifices and pleasurable amusements called Mysteries, which delivered mortals from the torments of the other world, while neglect of them incurred the punishment of an awful doom.

Socrates taught that it was impossible to escape from the consequences of our acts, that "Injustice breeds divisions and animosities and broils between man and man, while justice creates unanimity and friendship." He held that a just man would not deal unjustly with a man who is not just ; that the virtuous man would continue to act justly though others thought him a fool or a knave ; that to put a just man to death for his integrity could only have evil consequences for his murderers.

The prophet of Athens considered that he had a divine mission to show men of all classes that they were profoundly ignorant that they were ignorant. He confounded their loose reasoning, because the words justice, freedom and piety, and the like, had no definite meaning in their minds. "To use words wrongly and indefinitely is not merely an error in itself ; it also creates an evil in the soul." (*Phaedo*.)

He saw that so long as his countrymen believed all the horrible and immoral stories of the gods told by ancient writers like Homer and Hesiod, and imitated by the later poets, they would never understand the Higher Truth, that human vice, disease and misery could be replaced at will by virtue, health and happiness. It was impossible to accept a credence in freedom of choice if the gods were supposed to intervene in the interaction of cause and effect.

For this teaching Socrates was called an atheist, a quibbler, and ridiculed for "making the worse appear the better reason." He was deemed an incorrigible nuisance, because in the search for truth he demonstrated, out of their own mouths, that those whose reputation for wisdom was highest in the State were generally in a condition of that "shameful ignorance which consists in thinking that we know what we do not know."

The profiteers in injustice and falsehood were offended when they found that the youth of Athens were listening to Socrates' teaching; they felt instinctively that their power would be gone when the eyes of the citizens were opened. Socrates was therefore brought to trial and accused of impiety to the gods and of corrupting the youth of the city.

It is significant that the indictment preferred by Meletus, the obscure young poet, was backed by Anytus the artisan, and the real mover in the matter. Anytus had suffered for his zeal in the cause of the democracy at the time of the oligarchy of the Thirty. He represented the superstitious mob of Athens, and it is not improbable he believed that Socrates, who did not dissemble his views of what is at the present day carelessly labelled "Socialism," was a dangerous reactionary.

Socrates was found guilty by a small majority and condemned to death.

The Republic of Plato.

In a world which accepted slavery as a divine institution, Aristotle, in the interests of the slave-owners, pleaded for a "national minimum," on the grounds that while a slave might be insolent, fed and kept idle, he could not possibly work if inadequately nourished. So influenced was Plato by the confused multitude and mixture of ideas surrounding him from childhood, that in spite of his association with his master, Socrates, he was unable in his *Republic* to imagine a State in which there were no slaves.

In the ready-made Platonic conception of an ideal State, every natural desire and affection was to be violated: men and women were to be regimented in camps and controlled by philosophic supermen, similar to our Fabian "Aristocracy of Intellect." All love-matches were to be forbidden.

Women were to be the common property of the State, and children were to be bred like prize cattle in a stud farm.

As fast as the children were born they were to be received by State officials, whose especial care would be the regulation of the population in quality and quantity. "And will not these same officers have to superintend the rearing of the children, bringing the mothers to the nursery when their breasts are full, but taking every precaution that no mother shall know her own child, and providing other women that have milk, if the mothers have not enough; and must they not take care to limit the time during which the mothers are to suckle the children, committing the task of sitting up at night, and the other troubles incident to infancy, to nurses and attendants?" (*The Republic* of Plato, p. 168.)

The natural right of the parent to his or her own particular child was not to be respected. The discriminating instinct of maternity was due to prejudice, therefore its satisfaction must be forbidden! The word "forbidden" is frequently used in this portion of the *Republic*. No tyranny outranges that of benevolence in refined cruelty!

It is safe to say that no one would have been more astonished than Socrates himself to find that he was the accredited father of such a monstrous conception. Socrates, whose God "is one and true in word and deed: He neither changes Himself nor deceives others," considered that it were better to die than knowingly to utter a falsehood. In Plato's servile State, justice and freedom are conspicuous by their absence, and mendacity is therefore regarded as a necessity. "It is probable that our rulers will be compelled to have recourse to a good deal of falsehood and deceit for the benefit of their subjects." (P. 167.)

Socrates was not made to drink the hemlock for adherence to this disastrous doctrine.

The academic attempt of Plato to define an ideal State in terms of schoolmasterlike governors and subservient grown-up schoolchildren was a dangerous proceeding, and illustrates how, possessed of credible guidance, one may easily lose oneself in the surrounding fog of superstition. The aristocratic State, in so far as the real Socrates could have defined it, was presumably one in which free men and women were peers led by naturally chosen leaders, not

degraded slaves driven by an artificial caste of guardian slave-owners.

With self-determination for every individual reaching manhood and womanhood, the real democracy is the genuine aristocracy.

The Purpose of Slavery.

The passing epoch of accidental parasitism is not without purpose, for there is nothing purposeless in Nature. Just as in the individual to experience pain may awaken a dormant intelligence, so the terrible consequences of slavery of every kind serve to arouse a new consciousness socially of our duty towards our fellows.

It is symptomatic, at the turn from flood to ebb of a civilisation, for some few vigorous minds to put forth exceptional efforts for a spiritual awakening, and the number of these appears to increase in each succeeding crisis. Shining like great lights against a gloomy background, the deeds and thoughts of enlightened souls appear almost superhuman by contrast.

The dazzled doctrinaires with weak vision fail to note that slavery is the cause of retrogression in an experimental culture, and are deluded into thinking that slavery is a means of progress. These false prophets preach a "new slavery for the elevation of the type man" with the same zeal, and for the same psychological reason, that the drunkard preaches the efficacy of alcohol and dope.

Slavery is not a means of progress, any more than poison is a means of life; but just as the condign consequences of the taking of poison act as a deterrent teaching the wise that it is the will unto death, so the consequences of slavery act as a fearful warning, signifying that progress is not possible in that direction.

A Practical Demonstration.

Sparta, a hundred and sixty years after the Peloponnesian wars, gave a positive object-lesson of the immediate benefits accruing even from a partial reform based upon justice.

The number of freemen had been reduced to seven hundred, and land was in the hands of the few, conse-

quently wealth was concentrated among a few monopolists. The primitive simplicity of Spartan manners had given place to luxury on the one hand and abject poverty on the other.

The young king Agis attempted to revive the ancient Spartan virtue by cancelling all debts and by making a new distribution of lands, piously claiming support in the traditions attributed to the national lawgiver Lycurgus. The king relinquished all his own property, as well as that of his family, for the public good, but he was put to death as a traitor to his order.

A few years after the death of the patriotic king, Cleomenes, the son of Leonidas, succeeded in effecting the reforms which had been contemplated by Agis. A new lease of life was given to the aristocratic State, and the citizens, increased in numbers, were filled with a new spirit of progress and prosperity.

Although surrounded on all sides by powerful enemies, the tiny State retained its separate character for over fifty years.

From this episode in the history of Sparta we may draw the inference that enslavement by a foreign state becomes less and less likely in proportion as citizens emancipate themselves from social injustice. A knowledge of the Secret of History makes plain the lesson that self-determination cannot be said to exist at all for citizens who do not assert the common right to their country, and collect for public revenue the rent of their estate.