

From Hogg's Instructor.

THE PRESENT AGE.

ITS CHARACTERISTICS AND REACTIVE TENDENCIES.

PART I.

Sixty centuries have probably rolled over since the earth became the abode of man—the theatre of human action—the gigantic battle-field of principles. During these centuries countless millions of our race have acted, have suffered, have died, but the knowledge we possess respecting them is very partial and incomplete, resembling but the stranded fragments of some wreck, which have been cast by the ocean of oblivious time upon the shore. We form from them a general idea of the whole; we fancy the vessel sailing majestically on the open sea, but still the actual knowledge afforded bears no proportion to the amount of that which has been lost. Who can doubt that achievements as heroic as any which history records have been left unused—that many a true patriot, many a noble-hearted man, has lived in obscurity and died without any chronicler of his deeds—that virtuous actions without number—actions all of which have exerted influence, and which in their aggregate are influencing society now—are forgotten? But fragmentary as is the information we possess, it is sufficient to enable the philosophic student of the past to characterise each age by its leading peculiarities. So far as we are aware, no such attempt has been made, and yet the field of inquiry which it opens up would be in the highest degree interesting. It would be found that while each age had its own characteristics, yet it was very closely connected alike with those which preceded and those which followed, modified by the former, and in its turn modifying the latter; so that if, for any purpose, we wish to study a particular period of history, seeking something more than the bare outline of its events—if we would understand the impelling motives of its leaders—if we would explain its political or mental movements—we must look into the age which preceded, and mark its modifying power. Taking any age separately, all appears confusion; examining the events which are transpiring now without any reference to the past, we should soon lose ourselves in an inextricable web of contradictions. We must rather attempt to ascend from the plain, and, standing, to use the words of Bacon, “upon the vantage-ground of truth, where the air is always clear and serene, see the errors and wanderings, the mists and tempests in the vale below.” Thus looking back, and taking a bird’s-eye view of centuries, we may gain courage from the assurance that, amid much which is discordant and contradictory, there is real advance in every department of knowledge, of virtue, and of moral power. We admit that at the best the view will be partial, the survey will be incomplete; each observer will look through a differently-tinted lens, and that which to one is sombre, to another will be bright, the difference being not in the objects contemplated, but in the contemplating mind; besides which, results cannot accurately be determined while the process is going on; the web and woof are still mingling, the carpet with its beautiful dyes and perfect patterns is not woven; the scaffolding still surrounds the unfinished building, and it would be very premature to judge dogmatically, and speak as if we understood the bearing of all that transpires around. True philosophy is modest; and one of the first lessons which she teaches her votaries is this—that to whatever department they addict themselves, whether they would trace the springs of human action, investigate the natural history of the globe, read the records of geologic time, as engraven in the rocks, or learn something of other worlds, there is much of which they will necessarily remain ignorant, much which they will only learn after repeated repulses, and much in which the real truth is far from being that which seems apparent to all. But in the philosophic examination of the past, or the modest survey of the present, while we are not able to perceive the bearings of all events or the goal of all movements, we need not be discouraged. We possess data which enable us to anticipate a period—the anticipation cheering us amid much which depresses and still more which may perplex—when there shall have been a complete revolution of human events, when all that now seems chaotic, the strivings of mind with mind, the workings of human passion, the clashing of contending interests, the struggles between good and evil, shall issue in order, and harmony, and beauty, in holiness, happiness, and peace. Our hopes respecting human development—hopes springing not simply from our wishes, but chiefly from the records of Divine revelation—are very sanguine. We expect ages upon earth in which man shall be more happy than he has been before, when the experience of the past shall not be thrown away upon him, when he shall find that the greatest evils have ever been those which are self-inflicted, when his dignity shall be recognised, and when, whatever may be his social condition, he shall stand erect as the possessor of intellect, of soul—of that which, in the language of Milton, is “before the elements, and which owes no homage to the sun.”

How this state of things is to be brought about is another question—one respecting which opinions may differ; but that it shall hereafter be realised—that the beautiful dream of the golden age, over which man laments as having passed away with the infancy of the world, shall find its fulfilment, we hold with cheerful confidence. We may not live to see it, but let us so live as to prepare its way and hasten its arrival, hoping that from a higher sphere we may then be permitted to look down

and to rejoice in the triumph of principles which we may now be laboring to establish, and in the exercise of those courses which even now we see would make this earth but little inferior to Eden before the fall.

The examination of the present age has, like that of every other, difficulties peculiar to itself, arising partly from the amount and variety of the data to be examined, and partly from the unavoidable tendency in the human mind to exaggerate that which is near, and to over-rate the importance of the present, though to the prejudice and at the expense of the past. We cannot, as the actors in the scene, be sure that our estimate shall be quite fair, or that the judgments we may pass are uniformly correct. Conscious of this tendency, we must be upon our guard as to its operation, remembering that every previous period has for the time appeared the most momentous, and that, as we sometimes smile at the language which has often been used announcing the approach of a crisis, so we must be carefullest we expose ourselves to the ridicule of those who shall come after, and who will examine our era more dispassionately than we. At all events, we may arrive at an approximation to truth in attempting to fix some of the leading characteristics of the present age, to mention some of the reactive tendencies, and to point out some of the evils which are rife. It will, however, make the subject more interesting, and prepare us for the investigation, if we glance rapidly at some former ages, regarding them from their centres of civilisation, and briefly consider by what they were characterised.

The cradle of our race was in the east, and the first ages may be described as those of patriarchal simplicity—ages in which man’s wants were comparatively few, when the head of a family or of a tribe exercised a mild rule over the various members, and the arts being in their infancy, men were chiefly herdsmen or tillers of the ground. As the social feature in man became more strongly developed, this, combined with ambition in the strong and mutual convenience for the many, led to the formation of monarchies—the most ancient form of civil government on an extended scale. Sailing down the stream of time, our view is arrested by the old monarchical empires of the east—Babylon, probably the most ancient; Assyria, with Nineveh as its capital, dating from a few years later; Egypt, with its various dynasties, its public works, its scientific knowledge, and its mystic mythology; Israel, distinguished from all other people as the depository of Divine truth, and as the peculiar people of the one true God; Persia, humble in its origin, gradually increasing in territory, wealth and power; overturning, in conjunction with Media, the ancient Babylon, and swaying the sceptre over many tribes, until, rendered infatuated by prosperity, and deprived of all manly virtues, it, in its turn, fell before the arms of Greece. Ages of refinement and philosophical speculation succeeded. The influence of ancient Greece has not yet exhausted itself. We look there for the perfect forms of architectural beauty, and of sculpture which all but breathe; Plato still fascinates and instructs; the porch and the garden have even now their pupils. Marathon and Thermopylae, Salamis and Platea, exhibit to us patriotic valour unexampled; while the songs of Tyrtæus and the philosophies of Demosthenes stir the inmost soul of those who are affected with the power of eloquence, the love of country, and the music of sweet sounds. But Greece could stand no longer than she remained hardy, virtuous, and brave. Demosthenes warned and appealed in vain. Philip of Macedon destroyed her power, and then follow ages of military conquests. Alexander overran the east; conquered the east, and wept because he had no other to subdue; but, having failed to conquer his own passions, fell in a drunken debauch in the very prime of life. Of the division of his empire, and the ceaseless wars it occasioned, we do not speak.

[To be continued.]

FEATHER OF PEACE.

A Family of Quakers from Pennsylvania settled at the west in a remote place, then exposed to savage incursions. They had not been long there before a party of Indians, panting for blood, started on one of their terrible excursions against the whites, and came on the Quaker’s abode; but, though disposed at first to assail him and his family as enemies, they were received with such open-hearted confidence, and treated with such cordiality and kindness, as completely disarmed them of their purpose. They came forth, not against such persons but against their enemies. They thirsted for the blood of those who had injured them; but these children of peace, unarmid and entirely defenceless, met them only with accents of love, and deeds of kindness. It was not in the heart even of a savage to harm them; and on leaving the Quaker’s house, the Indians took a white feather and stuck it over the door to designate the place as a sanctuary not to be harmed by their brethren in arms. Nor was it harmed. The war raged all round it, the forest echoed often to the Indian’s yell, and many a white man’s hearth was drenched in his own blood; but over the Quaker’s humble abode gently waved the white feather of peace and beneath it his family slept without harm or fear.

Smithers says he always travels with a ‘sulky’—that is he always goes with his wife, who contrives to be obstinate and out of humor from the time they leave home till they get where they are going to. The only time she ever smiled, he says, was when he broke his ankle.

THE BROKEN HOUSEHOLD.

BY MISS ALICE CARY.

Vainly, vainly, memory seeks
Round our father’s knee,
Laughing eyes and rosy cheeks
Where they used to be;
Of the circle once so wide,
Three are wanderers, three have died.

Golden-haired and dewy-eyed,
Prattling all the day,
Was the baby, first that died;
O ’twas hard to lay
Dimpled hand and cheek of snow
In the grave so dark and low!

Smiling back on all who smiled,
Ne’er by sorrow thrall’d,
Half a woman, half a child,
Was the next God called!
Then a grave more deep and wide
Made they by the baby’s side.

When on where the other died
Only heaven can tell;
Treading manhood’s path of pride
Was he when he fell:
Haply thistles, blue and red,
Bloom about his lonesome bed.

I am for the living three
Only left to pray;
Two are on the stormy sea,
Farther still than they,
Wanders one, his young heart dim,
Oftenest, most, I pray for him.

Whoso’er they do or dare,
Whoso’er they roam,
Have them, Father, in thy care,
Guide them safely home;
Home, O Father, in the sky,
Where none wander, and none die.

From the New York Sun.

HOW TO MAKE A FORTUNE.

Take earnestly hold of life, as capacitated for, and destined to a high and noble purpose. Study closely the mind’s bent for a labor or profession. Adopt it early, and pursue it steadily, never looking back to the turned furrow, but forward to the good ground that ever remains to be broken. Means and ways are abundant to every man’s success, if will and action are rightly adapted to them. Our rich men and our great men have carved their paths to fortune and fame by this eternal principle—a principle that cannot fail to reward its votary if it be resolutely pursued. To sigh or repine over lack of inheritance is unmanly. Every man should strive to be a creator instead of an inheritor. He should bequeath rather than borrow. The human race in this respect want dignity and discipline. It prefers to wield the rusted sword of valorous forefathers, to forging its own weapons. This is a mean and ignoble spirit. Let every man be conscious of the God in him, and the providence over him, and fight his battle with his own good lance. Let him feel that it is better to earn a crust than to inherit coffers of gold. This spirit of self nobility once learned, and every man will discover within himself, under God, the elements and capacities of wealth. He will be rich, inestimably rich in self resources, and can lift his face proudly to meet the noblest among men.

OLD AUTHORS.

Having nothing of the superiority, and, we trust, little of the superciliousness of such minds we would earnestly recommend to those who read poetry the study of the old writer. Next to studying nature itself, they can hardly be better employed. Indeed the two have so much to do with each other, that their very differences serve to bring their resemblances to mind; and an acquaintance with the one, and attachment to it, will naturally be followed by an acquaintance and love of the other. The old authors have this quality in common with nature,—the more they are studied, the closer hold they take upon the mind. They shoot up and overrun us like vines, creeping along the windings of our feelings, and twining in among our thoughts with a growth so gentle and silent, that, although our hearts are kept fresh by them, and our minds overhung with their dawning beauties, the grateful sense that they impart to us is hardly noted, and is in us as if it were only our own happy nature. Perhaps it is owing to this quality that the common run of people are so little drawn towards them. For the greater part of men want something to take a rude hold upon them, something that flare upon them like a broad setting sun. Tangled and by-path overgrowings tease rather than delight them; and they lack that infant nativeness of heart which gladly lies down in warm, lighted nooks, and looks with a half strange delight upon the dancing sun-spots which play upon the grass under the thick wood.

A SHOWER OF COMPLIMENTS.—How fortunate I am in meeting a rain-beau in this storm,” said a young lady who was caught in a shower, the other day, to her ‘beau of promise,’ who happened along with an umbrella. “And I,” said he, gallantly, “am as much rejoiced as the poor Laplander, when he caught a rain-dear.” These are the beau-ideal of wet weather compliments.

The Politician.

From the Saint John Courier.

THE TIMBER TRADE.

The following admirable letter will commend itself to the attention of our readers:—

GENTLEMEN,—A deep interest which I feel in the prosperity of your Province—once the land of my adoption—I judge a sufficient apology for troubling you with a few remarks on its present state, more especially in regard to its staple trade and prospects.

I doubt not there is too much truth in the numerous complaints with which the colonial press abounds; it therefore becomes a serious and imperative duty for every man interested in the Colonies, whether pecuniarily or otherwise, calmly, impartially and energetically to consider, and endeavor to discover what is the great first cause of all this distress, and what are the remedies. In your Province there are many men of talent who would shine in any part of the world. How is it, I would ask, that so many of them, with all their perseverance, with all their energy, and possessed of every talent that constitutes the first rate man of business, have proved so unsuccessful? How is it that your population, who should be the means of urging on the Province to its proper standing among the nations of the earth, are flocking in thousands to a foreign shore? How is it that your rich and fertile tracts of country are so little cultivated? How is it that your press teems with advertisements of bankrupt merchants, millmen, shipbuilders and lumbermen? Would that the wisdom of your Legislature was employed more than it has been in the task of solving these questions, resting assured that when the cause of all this distress has been discovered, one great end will have been gained. A physician must have a perfect knowledge of the disease to prescribe correctly.

To my last question, I am aware that the following answer is very generally given: “We have sent to Britain property sufficient to meet all our engagements, and leave a handsome surplus; but this property has only realized a proceeds of ten, twenty five, fifty, or seventy five per cent. of the first cost.” This is undoubtedly true; a melancholy description of the timber trade, speaking volumes, and well deserving a more minute examination. I will state the case thus, taking deals as the standard and fair sample of your exports:

A merchant consigns a cargo of deals to Liverpool:

300 stand. Deals, first cost, @ 31 per stand.	£900
300 “ “ freight, @ 41 5s.	1275
300 “ “ charges, @ 25s.	375
	£2550

The cargo sells in Liverpool, 283 stand. @ 7 10s.

The loss is 43 1-3 per cent. on first cost.) £390

This is a result as favorable as the average of consignments to this port for the last two or three years. I am aware that ships have accepted less rates from St. John, during the past year, than £4 5s., but I adopt it as a medium rate for the Province. The first cost is quite low enough, and 4 per cent. for loss in measure is also under the average. The sale price is above the average of the last 10 years. Another reason for adopting 65s. as the rate of Freight is, that in the majority of cases where less rates have been taken the ships belonged to the port, and it was actually dividing the loss between the Ship-owner and Merchant. Your timber trade would appear to stand thus: your goods are purchased at the lowest possible price, a price that does not remunerate the producer—carried at the lowest possible rate of freight, a freight that cannot and does not pay the Ship-owner, and yet results in a loss of 43 1-3 per cent. Need we wonder at the poverty of the Province with such a trade as this, a trade which if carried on as of late years must ruin every one connected with it. How are we to account for this deplorable result? My answer is, that a greater amount of wood has been produced and thrown on the British markets than the said markets have been able to consume. I shall leave it for wiser heads to decide the question whether consumption is to regulate supply, or supply the consumption; but taking the past years as my guide, I do not hesitate in saying that if the timber trade is to be a profitable one, the production must be regulated by the consumption. Mark what a difference might be made in the trade. At present wood goods are poured into this market for immediate sale from every port and creek in the Colonies,—last year the following was the monthly import:—June, 13 vessels, 5500 tons; July, 75 vessels, 39,000 tons; August, 42 vessels, 21,000 tons; September, 44 vessels, 26,000 tons; October, 103 vessels, 65,000 tons; November, 56 vessels, 37,000 tons; December, 28 vessels, 15,000 tons. This enormous quantity of stuff is thrown on the market to be purchased by some seven or eight houses in the trade. They cannot vend it as fast as it is landed, and are compelled to store a large portion for their winter consumption, at a heavy expense of labourage and cartage, say 1 1-2 per foot on lumber, and 5s per standard on timber, to be followed by enormous yard-rents and interest; but they are compelled to keep a good assortment and buy freely of the early imports. Soon, however, as they have such a stock as makes them rather independent of the Importers, they withdraw from the market, and will only, as they express, buy downwards; that is, every cargo they purchase must be at a less price than the preceding ones. Nor can we blame the dealers for taking this step, being compelled to do so to