

Science and Civilization.*

BY R. J. COLPITTS.

That the civilization of today is in part the product of science is indisputable. Throughout the centuries progress and scientific investigation and discovery have gone hand in hand. It may even fairly be claimed that life under modern conditions would be impossible had not science discovered and appropriated for the service of man the mighty forces of nature. We cannot realize how great is the debt we owe until we have patiently studied the complex problems of modern life.

A superficial view would at once suggest that science has provided many conveniences to which we have become accustomed, and to be deprived of which now would cause us some annoyance and inconvenience. And this is as far as many people would go. To them the steam-engine and the electric motor are wonderful inventions which enable them to do their shopping, visit their friends, and travel abroad more easily and comfortably; the telegraph and the printing press seem cunning devices by which the news of the world is gathered more quickly, the sooner to meet the demands of an insatiate curiosity.

But to the student of sociology the wonderful and mysterious powers which man has thus tamed and harnessed to his use are mighty economic forces, perfect control of which means commercial and political supremacy—for nations and individuals. It is a conservative estimate that in the last thirty years the saving in time and labor in the production of the necessities of life has been 40 per cent. And this change has benefited not only the producer by enabling him to produce more, but also the consumer by lowering the cost of nearly all articles. The benefits of the change have been confined to no one class or one country. All have shared in the lightening of toil and the betterment of condition which have resulted. Why is it that we never more hear of a famine in civilized countries? Because the railroad and the telegraph, the arteries and nerves of the industrial system, bring all parts into vital relation, and a famine is no more possible than that one portion of the body should suffer from anemia while rich life-giving blood was being supplied to the rest of the tissues.

But not only in a material way has science ministered to humanity. In the intellectual realm as well she has made large contributions, and today she challenges all other subjects of human knowledge to show reason why they should continue to hold their place on the curriculum of school and college. We hear much of scientific studies and the scientific method, and when we consider the attainments of the ancients in almost every other department, we might fairly conclude that whatever advance has been made has been made in the realm of science.

But having admitted all this, must we go further and allow the claim so persistently advanced by the extreme advocates of the scientific position, viz., that between science and civilization there is a relation of causality rather than that of concomitance and interdependence? Can we allow that all the elements of that complex thing which we call modern civilization can be explained on the single basis of scientific knowledge? It would greatly simplify the intricate problems of human life if we could do so. It seems plain that on the material and intellectual side nearly, if not quite, all progress for many centuries may be thus accounted for. If, then, our civilization surpasses that of Greece and Rome only in material prosperity and knowledge of Nature's laws the case would be a strong one. Or, better, if we excel the primeval savage only because we have better tools and are more skillful in using them, along with a fuller appreciation of the fact that self-interest requires the repression of savage impulses and passions—if all this is admitted, then the scientific contention has been virtually proved.

But spontaneous and philosophical thought agree in condemning such a view. Man is not only a higher order of animal, with a more nicely adjusted physical mechanism, and a little more intelligence in the use of it; but man is a moral being with sense of responsibility; for whom obligation can never be translated into expediency, or expediency into obligation,—for whom "Thou oughtest" is essentially different from "It were best." Civilization ought to be and is a moral or ethical progress as well as a material and intellectual advance, and for this science can offer no satisfactory explanation. Even more. In respect to the presence of moral principles in the human race the scientific view is confessedly inadequate. "But," some one will say, "Does not evolution explain everything?" Yet evolution seeks only to investigate the order of development, and an order of development, however systematic it may be, can never become an efficient cause. Even Spencer in his ingenious and specious application of the theory to ethical problems nowhere attempts to supply the *raison d'être* of morality. To avoid the difficulty science would say that the sense of obligation and responsibility is but a temporary and undesirable form of thought, which, as knowledge increases, will be transcended with many other mental limitations. But universal experience

has shown that only as men have been controlled by a rigorous sense of duty has there been moral progress, and that without moral progress there can be no true advance in civilization.

But the question as to how we have reached a certain stage of development is of little interest in itself—compared with the question of the future—the question of how to complete the process and insure continued progress. So while science would class the genesis of morality among things unknown and unknowable, it may yet be claimed that the scientific view is sufficient to provide for the future.

It is plain enough that some provision must be made. Our civilization is as yet far from complete. No one would claim that the millennium has already begun. The grim and unceasing struggle with poverty and starvation which is waged by thousands of men and women, and the wretchedness and crime which exist in all our large cities side by side with wealth and culture make such a view impossible. The lynching of a suspected negro in Colorado, the details of which were too horrible to be published even in the newspapers, and the atrocities committed by civilized troops in China, serve to show that not all trace of the savage has yet been eliminated.

Does Science then make provision for this need, and what is the panacea? To such inquiries Science would say that want and misery and crime arise through insufficient production—that they have steadily diminished in proportion as man has enlarged his dominion over nature—and that what is needed is a fuller knowledge and a better control of the forces which Nature has designed to minister to the welfare of her offspring. According to this view crime is the result of ignorance, and sin is a disease. If this be true, then let our churches be converted into laboratories, and in the pulpits let the gospel of grace be replaced by the gospel of scientific knowledge, and let the care of our souls be committed to the physician of the body.

But is it true that all that is needed is an increase of production? Nay, it is even doubtful whether such an increase under present conditions would be desirable. Let us look at the facts. In the United States today more than one-half of the accumulated wealth is owned by one per cent. of the population, and in England three-fourths of the wealth is in the hands of less than two per cent. of the population. Does anyone suppose that an increase of wealth would insure a more equitable distribution, or remove the spirit of selfishness and avarice which is responsible for the present condition of affairs? And in regard to any other aspect of the problem Science is either silent or pessimistic. The much-vaunted principle of the survival of the fittest is inoperative in the moral sphere. The selfish strife and greed which this principle seems to justify must mean inevitably the loss of true morality, and without morality civilization is impossible. In many other respects also the principle fails when applied to human life.

Yet we should no more be discouraged by the failure of Science to provide for future progress than we should doubt our present development because science has offered for it no adequate explanation. Moral forces are none the less potent because they elude observation and experiment. Justice and truth and duty are no less binding on the conscience of mankind because they cannot be explained by scientific analysis. What though "moral alternatives" can not be "resolved into alternatives of outward condition, of wealth or poverty, of comfort or discomfort." The forces which have been the efficient cause of past progress have not lost their potency, and directed and controlled by Infinite Wisdom will work out for the sons of men a more perfect civilization, until even the law of duty shall be transcended, though not displaced, by the law of love.

The New Style of Sabbath

BY REV. THORORE L. CUYLER, D. D.

The wise and witty Dr. John Todd, of Pittsfield, who was, for a short time pastor of a rather fashionable city congregation, once said, in his caustic way: "It is amazing hard work to keep piety alive in this world. In the country they sleep it to death, and in the city they kill it by silks and ice creams." If Dr. Todd had lived twenty-five years longer, he would probably have affirmed that a far more formidable danger to that life of true piety in this land comes from the new style of Sabbath. The communities to which he preached half a century ago held what may be called the old-fashioned idea of Sunday as a day of rest from secular labor, and for the worship of God. The life of evangelical religion was held to be indissolubly linked with the life of the Christian churches, and their life to be dependent on the proper observance of God's Day and of his worship in the sanctuary. A steady and most deplorable change has been going on in these later years. A new style of Sabbath is very painfully visible to every careful observer, and the spiritual effects of this lowering of the Sabbath tone are undeniable. To the church it means "heart failure?"

One of the outcomes of the new Sabbath is the introduction, and immensely wide establishment, of the secular Sunday newspaper. That keen observer, Mr. Moody, repeatedly declared that he regarded the Sunday press as the most formidable foe to the influence of the gospel in our land. Whether the enormous circulation of these papers be one of the causes of the lowered tone of Sabbath observance, or only one of its effects, we need not stop to conjecture. He was certainly right in regarding the moral influence of a sadly large portion of the Sunday morning newspapers as antagonistic to the spread of evangelical religion. The secular Sunday press does its utmost to secularize the Lord's Day, and, by so doing, it aims a terrible blow, not only at evangelical religion, but at public morality. No one will deny that a vast number of people are kept from the house of God by this Sabbath-breaking press; they are spending sacred time over these blanket-sheets instead of listening to the message of eternal life. Those who do go from them to the sanctuary find a sorry preparation for worship in what the late Dr. Storrs tersely called "a bath of blood and fun." I wish it were true that no members of the church of Jesus Christ were supporters and readers of these journals. It is one of the saddest evidences of the encroachments of this new Sabbath that so many professed Christians are willing to support a press which puts its own pecuniary profits above the commandments of Jehovah, and the eternal interests of men. "Be ye not partakers of other men's sins."

Another evidence of this new Sabbath is to be found in the increasing difficulty to maintain a second service in a multitude of churches. Various devices are resorted to, such as musical "praise services," special courses of sermons, etc., but it is still true that churches which once were well attended in the evening are now attended by a handful. Many excellent people are kept from a second service by legitimate reasons, by home duties, or Christian labors elsewhere, yet the prevailing reason for thin congregations on Sunday evening is the preference to be somewhere else than in the house of God.

In an article I once wrote on "Building Up Country Churches," I exhorted the ministers in the rural districts to scour their parishes by thorough pastoral visitation, in order to reach and bring in the non-church-goers. A very clear-headed and faithful pastor in a parish not very far from one of the largest cities in Massachusetts sent me a very suggestive response. He says that he has visited freely and faithfully among the whole community, interested himself in the people, got their children to the Sunday School, and been kindly received in their houses. But he says "the great majority of the people do not come to church. It is not from the lack of friendly feeling toward me, but it is from pure worldliness. They want to go elsewhere, and do other things, or lounge at home over the Sunday newspapers. The lower element—the decidedly evil-minded element—I do not take into account. People who belong to the reputable class have come to regard the Sabbath as a day of general convenience for all sorts of things which they cannot well attend to on the six working days. The children are sent to Sunday School until they are old enough to do as they choose, and then they are likely to join their elders in remaining away from church. Christians are too easily led into this secularization of the Sabbath, beginning very commonly with family visiting. This is fatal to church-going." This able and excellent pastor adds that he had recently visited another rural parish in Massachusetts whose church in former generations was well filled, but is now attended by only a handful. The fault was not chargeable to want of fidelity on the part of their minister, but to a widespread disregard of the claims of God's holy day and of his worship.

Such a testimony as this from such a man as my correspondent is a danger-signal of a very alarming character. It reveals the fact—confirmed from other sources—that the good old New England Sabbath is losing its hold on the popular conscience. A new style of Sabbath is coming in—Sabbath that begins with a huge secular newspaper instead of the Bible, that fills the roads and parks with bicycles headed away from church, that prefers a visit to a neighbor to an interview with Christ Jesus—a Sabbath that has no spiritual savor, and which puts the things that are temporal above the things that are eternal. Piety dwindles and dwells in the atmosphere of such a desecrated Lord's Day. Let us take warning from Germany, where Protestantism is fearfully crippled by a false conception of the Sabbath; in its chief cities, not over one-fifth of the nominal Protestant population enters God's house on God's own and only day for his worship?

Have Christians no responsibility for the subtle growth of this new style of Sabbath? Do our pulpits emphasize sufficiently the tremendous truth that the Creator owns the Sabbath, and that robbery of him means ruin to ourselves? Do most of our church members keep the Lord's Day as sacred and as sweet as they ought to do? The very life of the church of Jesus Christ is intertwined with the life of the Sabbath; the decay of the one means the slow death to the other! We are talking about revivals; let us pray and work and act for a revival of God's Day!—Christian Intelligence.

* Graduating essay delivered at Acadia College, June 6th, 1901.