

## CIVILIZATION, OLD AND NEW.

TO be interested in the poorer classes is in good taste. It is, also, comprehended in "civilization." In England there is a spasmodic impulse towards the poor. About a year ago there was an awakening to the fact that the poorer classes had no homes to live in. They had shelters, but no homes. Kind persons convened meetings and made speeches; and royal princes paid visits to the "outcast poor." The result has been an increase of information in regard to the dire sufferings of "*les misérables*." By and by there will be a systematizing of suggestions. New buildings will be run up; old hovels will be pulled down; and then the committees will rest from their labors. It is a good movement, if spasmodic. That in the nineteenth century—and very close upon the end of it—English society should become interested in the very poor, is a hopeful sign that in the old age of the world civilization will not ignore charity.

A curious discussion is being raised by some philosophers as to whether civilization is the result of evolution or of wise and beneficent legislation. Yet these philosophers have not told us—what should have been their first postulate—the real meaning, the whole meaning, of civilization. The movement just referred to, the new interest in the outcast poor, helps us to get at the high-class notion of civilization, as well as at the compass of its beneficence. We do not learn much from the illustration. Our philanthropists, like our philosophers, are not "thorough." Yet, at least, our philanthropists do something, which is more than can be said of our philosophers. These last gentlemen think and live up in the clouds. Upon all subjects they begin nowhere, and they stop there. In regard to civilization, as in regard to religion, they seem to have no postulates, no beginnings. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at that they have no endings. "What is civilization?" we may ask them; but they will only answer us by telling us "how it grows." And even on this point they are as speculative as they are cold. Mere theories as to civilization—as to its causes or effects—may be interesting from the intellectual point of view, but the poorer classes are unable to dine off theories, or to pay rent out of speculative philosophy. It cannot matter one pin to the roofless outcast from all home, nor even to the half-clothed or half-hungry, whether civilization be a purely natural development, in accordance with the so-called laws of evolution,—brought

about by the activity of individuals, and amplified by hereditary transmission,—or the result of legislation which secures liberty to the individual, and presents him with the opportunities of culture. What *does* matter to the poorer classes is the *nature* of that civilization which is assumed to be their true object of aspiration, and to afford to them blessings and enjoyments. Our philosophers will not define these things for us. Civilization is affirmed to have existence, and to be capable of still further development; but whether it includes anything higher than late dinners with silver plate, express trains, electric lights, standing armies, our modern theorists seem rather afraid to tell us.

If society be progressively self-civilizing—a statement which we should accept with distrust—it can only be so because the individuals who compose it are personally bent on “improving themselves.” But does civilization mean self-improvement? It means popularly nothing of the sort. It means the arts of good harmony, which citizens, dwelling together, have learned from experience to be advantageous. Civilization means convenience. It means the calm and the ease which the observance of the proprieties secures to the most cultivated in good manners. To the rich classes it means luxury and repose; to the middle classes it means comfort and good behavior; and to the hardworking poor it means protection by the police and by the laws which prevent robbing and being robbed. As to the “inventions” of civilization, they are the result of business enterprise, *plus* the inherited gains of each age from the last age—that is, the gains from experience. The wonder is that, the world being so old, we have learned so very little in so long a time. The nonsense which is talked about our “enlightened age” is only to be accounted for by our vanity. Considering that we inherit all the knowledge and all the wisdom which half a dozen thousands of years have been heaping up, it is strange that the world is so full of mistakes; it is strange that no man has found out infallible politics; that, as to a religion, our newest philosophers are still searching for it; and, as to society, we have not yet housed our poor. We, accidentally, inherit the benefits which have come to us from the past industries of a very old world, and fancy ourselves a superior generation because we blunder over the uses of others’ toil. But what has all this to do with civilization? Conventionally speaking, there is, unquestionably, *a* civilization; an external social refinement, or good-fellowship; there is a growing love of easiness in the material order, and of still greater easiness in freethinking. Is this, then, a true civilization? No more than money can be said to be personal merit, or good manners to be virtue or purity.

That the word civilization has different meanings—which it

would be absurd to confuse in critical estimate—is as obvious as that the highest kind of civilization is the least studied, the least cherished, in our own age. Let the Socialists have their way in substituting state for individual action, or for corporate enterprise, and they would scarcely even touch upon the question of civilization—as a Catholic Christian should understand it. The Socialist is only thinking of abstract ideas of social blessedness, so far as labor and possessions are concerned. Or again, the Evolutionist, who views biologically the development of what he accounts to be civilization—just as he views the development of religion, as well as of the whole natural order—may indulge his theories without a thought as to that higher civilization which never was, never will be, *nationally* prized. How, then, is it possible, if the highest kind of civilization be ignored by the most cultivated societies—ignored as too sublime to be attainable—that the world, in its old age, can be asked with any hopefulness to leave off talking of civilization and to practice it?

There is a material, an intellectual, and a moral civilization. The most popular of these divisions is the material. There are many men who are superlatively silly, and many who are profoundly immoral, who would be shocked if an imputation were breathed against their civilization, or who would scorn the imputation as ridiculous. Who should say that any gentleman who rides in a brougham, and who knows how to take his hat off to a lady, can be wanting in the graces of civilization, any more than in the appreciation of its luxuries? The popular idea of civilization is the whitewashing of barbarism; and barbarism means rudeness of toilet and of manner, with a contempt for the fine arts and for education. We say, arbitrarily, that a people is not civilized, because it cannot be trusted with civil liberties (some people say this of the Russians); but what we mean by “uncivilized,” in common parlance or apprehension, is the not having the appliances of modern comfort, or the not having the faculty to appreciate them. Now, in all such estimates, the ancient Greeks or ancient Romans (just as they were coming to their downfall) thought very much as we now think. Nay, in some things the ancient Persians or Carthaginians were, materially, quite as civilized as we are. They were our inferiors in but little save inventions. So that to say that civilization, materially, is anything to be proud of, or to aspire to, is really to lay claim to being barbarously self-indulgent; and this is most certainly to be uncivilized. No, civilization is not material; or, at the best, it should be so accidentally.

Pass we then to intellectual civilization. Now, here again we find it difficult to say that, intellectually (save only in the enjoyment of opportunities), the modern peoples of Europe are superior

to the contemporaries of Socrates, Cicero, or Virgil. But let us come down to much later contrasts, to the contrast between the "Middle Ages" and our own age. Take away the art of printing out of the world, take away the *accidents* of invention, and are the peoples of modern Europe more appreciative of wisdom, of genius, of industry, of individuality, than they were in the days, say, of the Crusaders, or when Michel Angelo sketched an outline for St. Peter's? The boast of modern enlightenment—which, of course, means civilization—is the boast only of the *possession* of extraordinary means of education, not of the *using* them to the utmost advantage. A thousand newspapers, or the same number of public libraries, do not make a people intellectual. And here we come to the question: If to be civilized, intellectually, does *not* mean to possess vast opportunities, what is that spirit which should animate the intellect so as to justify the claim of civilization?

Assuming that there is a material, an intellectual, a moral side to the just apprehension of being "civilized," what can be understood by the word "moral"? The answer may be found in Catholic history. All that has been grandly done in the last nineteen centuries has been done by the inspiration of faith. The history of the Church is the history of civilization. As Macaulay put it: "The history of the Catholic Church joins the two great ages of human civilization. No other institution is left standing which carries the mind back to the times when the smoke of sacrifice rose from the Pantheon, and when camelopards and tigers bounded in the Flavian amphitheatre. The proudest royal houses are but of yesterday when compared with the line of the Supreme Pontiffs." And this institution, the Catholic Church, has given the *motive*, or object, to intellect, which was precisely what was wanted for civilization. Take a most familiar example of the blending of a natural heroism with a supernatural. The mere mention of the Knights of the Temple, of St. John of Jerusalem, of the Teutonic Order, of St. Raymond, recall to us the union of the most robust martial spirit with the spirit of robust faith and robust virtue. Without exaggerating the merits of the Crusaders—which, doubtless, were often marred by a natural vanity—there is enough of "true zeal" in their chivalry to compel us to call their motive "ineffectual." Take a still grander illustration of the same motive—though acting in a different groove, and with different temper—the monastic life of learning and of piety. Now, here we have the intellect devoted to three agents, each of which is the highest of its kind: first, the cultivation of the highest learning; next, the cultivation of the highest virtue; and thirdly, the charitable protection of the weaker and poorer classes against the tyranny or the impiety of feudal lords. The abbeys and the priesthood were

the homes and the pattern of the highest civilization possible to men ; just as, in a quite different groove, the spirit of Christian chivalry—in what we may call the second half of the Middle Ages—chose an object which, in faith and elevation, is proved to have been the noblest that was practical. The Crusaders did not know all the great things they were doing for the after history of both religious and civil life ; but this did not lessen the grandeur of the object, which, intellectually, was eternal and sublime. And just as chivalry and charity were blended—at least in purpose—in the spirit of the Catholic Crusaders, so let it be noted—for it is most appropriate to our subject—that the same blending was characteristic of monasteries. We are accustomed to pride ourselves at this end of the nineteenth century on the magnificent civilization of our public hospitals. The pride of the boast is quite justified. Yet, in the Middle Ages it was the exception for any monastery to be without a public hospital for all comers. “ Public beneficence ” was twin-born with the monastic life. Just as the Crusaders were both chivalrous and charitable, so the monks defended the weak against the strong, and nursed every wayfarer who fell sick. And here let a few features be noticed, very rapidly, of what may be called the true, as contrasted with the modern and spurious, civilization.

It was just at the time when the ages of faith were fully ripe in all parts of the Christian world, but when civil society was beginning to fall away from its old allegiance and chivalry and devotedness, that there broke over Germany and England, and subsequently over almost half of Europe, that most detestable revolution, the Reformation. Protestantism broke the unity of civilization. Civilization was at its height when Erasmus was examining into what he could find of all the sources of knowledge ; when Columbus was discovering a new world ; when Vasco da Gama was doubling the Cape ; when Ferdinand Cortez was penetrating a new continent ; when the standard of Castile was floating at Oran, and the Mussulman had been driven from Granada. In Italy philosophy was deeply studied. Spain was, perhaps, the queen of martial enterprise ; and the Pontiffs were blessing the ships that took out armies of missionaries to many a new country of the known world. And here let one great fact be noted. Centuries before these days the Catholic Church had crushed slavery ; for, having begun by improving the condition of slaves, and then gone on to obtain their enfranchisement, she ended by excommunicating all persons who indirectly took part in slave-traffic. The Council of Orleans, in 549 (a thousand years before the time of Paul III., who, like Urban VIII., and Benedict XIV., prohibited the practice of slavery), decreed that all slavery was anti-Christian. This was the true spirit

of civilization. But, on every other point of civilization the Catholic Church had led the way. Women, by Catholicity alone, became socially the equals of men. The indissolubility of marriage, by Catholicity alone, became elevated into a Christian dogma. Education, as every writer of any eminence has confessed, was carried to its highest point by the Church. The individual, the family, society, were, by the Church alone, sanctified; and all the world was included in one bond of brotherhood—the highest achievement of civilization. To the old world the exact opposite was civilization. To the Greek or to the Roman all strangers were barbarians; to the Catholic all strangers were brothers. And one word must be said as to civil government, for it is but little apprehended by the majority of Protestants how the Church has fought the battle of “the people.” The Catholic teaching was always this (and Suarez maintained it against a king of England), that princes received power “mediately” from God, but “immediately” from the people whom they governed. Rousseau’s peevish saying, “Man is born free, and he is everywhere in fetters,” might be rendered with perfect truth, “Every Catholic was always free, but heresy and schism destroyed freedom.” Briefly, before the time of the Reformation civilization had made all the progress which, humanly speaking, was possible to it. Protestantism perverted its course. The progress which has been made in any sphere of civilization, during the last three hundred years, has been made in spite of, not by the aid of, Protestant ideas, and has been a heritage of the Catholic civilization.

Luther, Calvin, Melancthon, and Beza,—so, too, Grotius, Papin, and Leibnitz,—all confessed that *after* the ruinous Reformation, learning, both in universities and outside them, fell down to a very common-place degree. And as to what we understand by “ideas,” never, since the period of the Reformation, has philosophy soared as it did before it; never have painters, or architects, or poets, grasped the “supernatural idea.” The spirit of faith, which touched with fire the old artists, has dwindled into compliments to “modern thought.” In all the “religious” paintings of the Middle Ages, every one who has intuition must detect an “idea,”—which now seems quite lost to our best painters,—the “idea” of a supernatural purity. This idea was a realization by faith. Yet, not only did artists realize, they painted. They could not have painted had they not been able to realize; and had they lived in Protestant England, they could not possibly have realized the “idea” of virgin purity, out of Protestantism. Could Murillo have thought out his Catholic subjects with the Thirty-nine Articles for his theology? or could Dante have imagined his *Divine Comedy* in the atmosphere of a modern parsonage-house? or could Michel

Angelo have chiselled that exquisite "Agony," which is in St. Peter's, had he been "inspired" by heresy and schism? And one word must be said as to Shakespeare. His Catholic genius ran riot in Protestant revels. Shakespeare was a "product of the ages of faith," though accidentally living under Protestant rule; nor is it possible to conceive of his combination of greatnesses as having been fathered by "modern thought." He linked the old world with the new. Nor can modern civilization claim *him* for its son any more than it can claim St. Thomas Aquinas, or St. Augustine, or the mighty architects who built Catholic cathedrals. The motive, the object, was wanting to modern piety, modern talent, modern genius, modern "faith." *Waste* was begotten of that rebellion, which killed the motive, the object, of civilization. For ideas, men took up with speculations; for profound study, they took up with controversy; for divine faith, they took up with human caprice; for Christendom, they took up with national churches. Protestantism contained the principle of dissolution, in that it shivered the unity of civilization; so that, whereas, in the Middle Ages, a Spaniard or an Englishman, travelling to any Christian country, was certain to grip the hand of a brother Catholic, from the time of the Reformation he was timid in expecting sympathy from some new-born disciple of a new sect. Civilization stood still under such a shock. It has never recovered its deep purpose, and now we have to fall back on a fictitious philanthropy, and on the complacency and shallowness of philosophers, in the absence of the motive, the object, the intensity of a civilization which *began* in Catholic unity.

Yet there is one point on which modernism so prides itself that it is difficult to shake the delusion: "Liberty, religious and civil, was born," says a modern writer, "of the Reformation, which proves that the Reformation was civilizing." Civil liberty, on the contrary, was born of that protection which the Holy See always gave to suffering peoples, taking their part against half-civilized tyrants, whether kings, feudal lords, or heresiarchs. As to religious liberty, two reflections may be made. The first is, that in most of the struggles between professedly Christian princes, religion has been "used" (as it was used by the late Czar) as a pretext for robbery or injustice; just as Cromwell used religion as a pretext for regicide, and Queen Elizabeth used religion as a pretext for hanging (and also for disemboweling and quartering) about forty Catholic priests and two hundred laity; so, in all ages, ambitious princes have made religion responsible for crimes which necessitated a good excuse, and which the Pontiffs and the priesthood could not prevent. The closest student of history, who "reads everything on both sides," is often puzzled to assure himself which side was

sincere ; which side was telling lies to the Pontiff ; which side was cloaking infamy with religion, which side was the more cruel, the most merciful. De Maistre, in his masterly treatise on the Inquisition, shows how absolutely necessary it is to know *everything* to form a judgment on all historical scandals. Meanwhile, this one remark must be hazarded : that Protestants are the last people in modern history who ought to presume to claim the title of "civilized" on the ground of granting others religious liberty ; for, as Hallam and Macaulay and Guizot have stated,—and, indeed, every historian of any note,—it was persecution *alone* which established Protestantism ; so that Protestant religious liberty is *not* civilized.

But, leaving the historic points to one side (since a whole book would not suffice for even a summary), has the new "liberty," it must be asked, made civilization more lovely, more generous, more heroic, more Christian ? One word will suffice to sum up modern civilization, and this is that hateful word selfishness. Just as true civilization is all summed up in "charity," so false civilization is selfishness. A few words can demonstrate this truth. If most people were unselfish, it would be impossible that society should contain entire classes which are miserable ; it would be impossible that whole classes should be driven to crime through the ignorance or the incentives which are preventable ; it would be impossible that sectarianism and selfishism and atheism should be fomented by the *examples* in high places ; in short, it would be impossible that this so-called civilized age should be, as it is in truth, so uncivilized. The whole philosophy of civilization was once summed up in the precept : "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." In obedience to that principle, all society would be civilized ; whereas, society as a whole is uncivilized. So that it comes to this : that, in individual civilization must be found the civilization of communities ; whereas, almost the whole world is so horribly selfish that civilization means the worship of self. Before the Reformation, the *principle* of unity, *plus* the sublime object of Catholic life, made civilization and charity to mean one thing ; after the Reformation, the *principle* of disunion, *plus* the weakened objects of the human will, made civilization and selfishness to be inseparable. This is the general statement of the whole truth. It is only in general terms it can be stated. Individual exceptions prove nothing. The present age is an uncivilized age, because it makes materialism its chief good, while caring little for those who have *not* that good. In 1884 it suddenly occurs to English society that hundreds of thousands of the English poor are not housed. While esteeming material blessings above all other blessings, society esteems them chiefly for "Number One." Thus, both in



principle and in practice, civilization has dropped to paganism, or, to what is much the same thing, living for self. Intellectually, civilization has lost its object, and, therefore, morally, has lost its grace and its heart.



### THE CLASSICS IN MODERN HIGHER EDUCATION.

*A College Fetish.* An Address by Charles Francis Adams, Jr. Third Edition.

*The Greek Question.* "Popular Science Monthly," November and December, 1883.

*The Question of a Division of the Philosophical Faculty.* By Dr. A. W. Hoffman.

*Ueber die Bedeutung der Sprache und des Sprachunterrichts für das geistige Leben.* Von Professor E. Zeller.

ONE of the most striking characteristics of our age is its spirit of unrest. This spirit manifests itself everywhere and among all classes. It animates the inventor, the speculator, the reformer, the anarchist. It prescribes the changes of our bonnets and of our medicines. It inspires scientific progress and political revolutions. It has undermined the nobility of birth in Europe, and is now assailing the aristocracy of money. It has shaken thrones, threatens the long immovable foundations of the rights of property, and strikes at religion itself. Whilst it has called into life a thousand improvements, it respects nothing, however hallowed by age or authority. Where property, society, political institutions, and religion are daily made the subject of novel speculation, experiment, and attack, it would be strange if the old system of higher education alone escaped unassailed. Nor has it been an exception to the rule.

For thirty years back, voices have been heard demanding the partial or complete discarding of the classics in the gymnasias, the colleges and universities of the nineteenth century. At first few and feeble, these voices gradually grew in volume and strength until the modest petition swelled into a loud, in some cases a furious, chorus of demand. At the college commencement, at the society anniversary, among the doctors of science and the masters