

to work out their own destiny first of all apart, and make the most of their own special abilities and circumstances.

Now, there is no question that the most potent influence whereby man has been broken up into nationalities and these kept separate from each other is the diversity of language. This has been the chief hindrance to the formation of world empires in every age and when they have been formed it has had most to do with their disruption. It has checked intercourse, interfered with the ready flow of sympathy, created misunderstanding and suspicion even among those that were otherwise close of kin. No mode of counteracting this repellant force has ever been devised which could claim more than a temporary success. A Nebuchadnezzar or an Alexander, a Caesar or a Napoleon might produce an apparent unification of nationalities by his military genius. But the moment their strong hands were withdrawn the combinations fell to pieces. And the cleavage was commonly along language lines. This earliest effort on the plain of Shinar, which at first promised to be successful, was frustrated by exactly the same cause as the others. In itself diversity of languages seems a great evil, imposing onerous burdens on the race, which it is ill-fitted to bear. But as the safeguard of nationality it has been, like most other divine judgments, an unspeakable blessing to the world. It has been the effective guarantee of liberty and the indispensable condition of real progress in civilization.

This disrupting power of language and the ultimate good that comes from it are perhaps hardly among the commonplaces of thought, even to us. But it is probably a good deal easier for us to see the inner connection between these things than it would have been for the early writer of this book, if he had been left to his own unaided observation; and a good deal easier for him than for those in the midst of the events. Indeed there is no reason to suppose that they understood the matter at all. It is one of the many intangible proofs of the writer's inspiration that he was enabled so far to penetrate the philoso-