

fathers' Human character has risen to excellence under every form of political constitution, but I do not see that democracies have shown any marked superiority in this respect, or that in this favoured age there is any special increase of personal dignity or merit. The French have not particularly improved since the Great Revolution. The peasantry may be better off, but they have not shown themselves braver or more patriotic. The literature of France is not purer; the statesmen are no wiser. Napoleon's soldiers who had Europe under their feet were born and bred under the old *régime*. England has done well to abolish negro slavery, but whether to have raised the negro at a single step to be the white man's equal is to have made him in fact the white man's equal, or to have put him in the way of becoming so, is still a prophecy and waits to become a fact.

"One explanation there is of the levelling spirit of modern times which is at least intelligible. Most men, high or low, in these days have come to make it the principal object of their lives to get as large a share as they can of money and enjoyment. Exceptional power or privilege is likely to be abused as long as this is so; and all being on the same moral level, caring only for what they can get, all may claim to be on the same political level, to look after their own interests.

"I urged this on Carlyle when he was writing his *Shooting Niagara*. He flung it from him with disdain. 'Interests!' he said; 'what have men to do with interests? There is a right way and a wrong way. That is all that we need think about.'

"Yet I believe my explanation is the real one. It is quite true that class privileges nowadays would be unfairly used. The mistake is in assuming that it was always so, and

that such inequalities at the time when they arose were as mischievous as they would be at present.

"In my reading of English history there was once a warmer relation between high and low, when each class thought more of its duties than its interests, and religion, which was the same to all, was really believed in. Under such conditions inequality was natural and wholesome. When religion became opinion, dubious more or less, and divorced from conduct, while pleasures became more various and more attainable, the favoured classes fell away from the intention of their institution, monopolized the sweets of life, and left the bitter to the poor.

"Motion and heat, it is well known, are two modes of one and the same force. Motion can be converted into heat, or heat into motion, but both cannot exist together. It is the same with power and luxury. An aristocracy contented with plain living and bearing its share in the strokes and batterings of life, might keep its privileges for ever. An aristocracy which has nothing to show for itself but palaces and splendid idleness, must expect to forfeit its privileges. The palaces and idleness it may keep for a time, but these, too, with uncertain tenure.

"The sum of it all is that human society is in healthy condition when the wise rule the ignorant—rule with equal-handed authority over high and low, rich and poor. But that it can prosper at all without any authority subject only to an imaginary line that one man's rights are not to interfere with his neighbour's, is a devout imagination which prophecy may enable us to believe, but which has no sanction from history. Mankind are made unequal. Legislation cannot make them equal, and freedom does not create the virtues which might make the presumption into a reality.