

called a halt upon this tendency of Darwinian speculation. As far back as 1863 Huxley had declared that "the advance of mankind has everywhere depended on the production of men of genius."<sup>1</sup> At a more recent date, fortunately, the late William James has given us<sup>2</sup> two essays on the subject with special reference to the extravagantly democratic theories of Herbert Spencer and Grant Allen. The leading idea of these essays is that the great man is the unexplained "variation" of Darwin's doctrine on the origin of species;<sup>3</sup> and accordingly it is contended that the superiority of a great man is due to intrinsic characteristics, generally inscrutable to science, rather than to extrinsic conditions in physical or social environment. "If anything is humanly certain," says James, "it is that the great man's society, properly so called, does not make him before he can remake it."<sup>4</sup> Again, the metaphor of the words, "The best woodpile will not blaze till a torch is applied,"<sup>5</sup> seems like a reminiscence of Carlyle's "I liken common languid Times.....to dry dead fuel, waiting for the lightning out of heaven, that shall kindle it. The great man, with his free force direct out of God's own hand, is the lightning."<sup>6</sup>

This view is in thorough harmony with Darwin's general, but also explicit, teaching. He too was struck by the insignificant influence of environment in producing any significant variation from a common type, though such variation he regards as essential to the origination of new species. The frankness with which he expresses his perplexity over this fact is sometimes amusing. In a letter to Sir Charles Lyell he declares that he feels "inclined to swear at the North Pole and, as Sidney Smith said, 'even to speak disrespect-

1 See Huxley's "Life and Letters," Vol. I., p. 259.

2 In the volume entitled "The Will to Believe."

3 This idea, however, had been suggested by Huxley in the letter just quoted, where he adds that the production of men of genius "is a case of 'spontaneous variation.'"

4 "The Will to Believe," p. 234.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 242.

6 "Lectures on Heroes, etc.," Lecture I.