

with which the great experiments in ethical ideas are actually worked out. The great movements represented by asceticism and casuistry, for instance, have extended over many centuries and have affected the lives of many generations. Their influence is by no means exhausted even yet, but as they no longer command the respect of the educated mind they may be expected to fade out steadily from the world until they are but a memory. The same slowness of movement has been manifest in such matters as the abolition of slavery and the emancipation of women, in which the tendency has been gradually upward, until slavery at any rate has quite vanished from Christendom with little chance of any permanent return. Ethical ideas, whether true or false, make way slowly for the most part and produce their ultimate fruits only after a long period of actual human experience. No doubt with the advance in civilization and general intelligence the tendency of all movements, social, political and moral, is to accelerate, but there is no reason to suppose that the law of human progress will be substantially different in the future from what it has been in the past. The reformer is apt to become impatient at the world's stolidity and inertia. It may be some consolation to reflect that if this unduly retards the reforms in which he is interested, it also conserves the good that has been already gained.

Another lesson that is forced upon us by the past is as to the danger of forward movements fairly initiated still losing their way and settling down into some form wholly alien to their original spirit. Hardly any better illustrations of this can be given than those already mentioned. The monastic movement began in a noble aspiration after an unworldly, self-sacrificing life, and in many individual instances they no doubt realized their aspirations as fully as ever can be the case in this world. But in spite of its initial aim, and the worthiness of individual members of the monastic orders, the movement as a whole ultimately became so corrupt and so corrupting to society that almost every Christian government in the world has been driven to the necessity of putting it