

and how the grand old Grecian myths told the same tale, I should be allowing this digression to run away with me, and will therefore pause while there is yet time.

The next great rule is that, in Europe at least, mental laws are more powerful than physical laws in moulding the fates of nations. Consequently our first study must be the operation of the mental laws, and we must consider the others as merely subsidiary or conflicting and disturbing elements. Of mental laws, those which we call intellectual, affording as they do unlimited scope for expansion, are more potent in bringing about a state of civilization than moral laws, which are from their nature hardly capable of progressive improvement.

I have now gone briefly over the great general principles on which Buckle expected not only to explain the past, but to a certain extent to forecast the future: it remains to consider a few of the objections that have been urged against his theory.

I do not number among the objections worthy of an answer that common stigma of infidelity which Buckle had to endure in common with so many other noble minds. But as that reproach may operate to deter many from opening his pages, it is only just that I should point out how falsely it is applied to him. His sentiments towards Christianity may be gathered from his allusions in the chapter on the early causes of the French Revolution to what he calls "the unhappy crusade against Christianity" which preceded those times of upheaval. In a noble passage he points out how the abuses of the system might have been cut away while the foundations of Christianity remained intact. While preserving the right to reform a Church as well as other institutions, he says, "we dare not tamper with those great religious truths which are altogether independent of it, truths

which comfort the mind of man, raise him above the instincts of the hour, and infuse into him those lofty aspirations which, revealing to him his own immortality, are the measure and the symptom of a future life."*

It is said, however, and this deserves an answer, that Buckle's theory of necessary laws governing the course of national existence detracts from man's freewill and God's superintending Providence. For the purpose of this argument it will only be fair for us to take it for granted that individual freedom of will *does* exist in some degree, as it would be merely evading the difficulty, to take shelter under the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. But in the first place the objectors are met by this reply, that freedom of will in the unit is perfectly consistent with the subjugation of the group or family to a law. Take a herd of cattle grazing in the meadows, free to go in any direction they please. As the sun rises in the heavens the herd (*as a herd*) will probably have gone to seek shelter under the trees, although a stray cow here or there may prove its independent spirit by wandering in a different course from the rest.

Again, this freedom of will is not absolute. We are all of us aware, for instance, of the force of hereditary influences, how the child of a drunkard may inherit the fatal craving for liquor, how disease, deformity, habits, and even crimes descend no less surely than riches and honours, a truth recognized alike by the prophet who spoke "of the fathers having eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth being set on edge," and by the social poet who passes his laugh and his jest at some

"—tenth transmitter of a foolish face."

* Vol. ii, p. 255. I do not wish to deceive people by leading them to believe from what I have said above that Buckle was an orthodox Christian. His position reminds me more of Shelley's, a dislike of modern Christianity *because* of its dissimilarity to Christ.