

people must be virtuous. But 'virtue,' as it is called, being the most precious of all things, is of all things the hardest to come by; and if we are to have the most moderate success in the search for it, we must go to work with the same direct and patient effort, with which we learn any other difficult art.

"Aristotle observes that in progressive democratic communities *αρετή*, or moral excellence, ceases to be an object of first importance. Of *αρετή* it is thought that *ὁποδὸν οὖν* (ever so little) will be enough to get along with, and that little will come of itself. And he adds that it does not come unless more systematically sought after, and that for want of it the Greek republics went upon the rocks.

"According to Aristotle, that is the best condition of things which produces not the largest amount of knowledge or wealth, but the men of noblest nature. And I cannot see that there is any distinct progress in productions of this kind. To compare one age with another is difficult to do at all, and impossible to do completely; but the most sanguine believer in evolutionary progress would hardly say that if he were to meet Socrates or Cicero or St. Paul he would be conscious of any great superiority to them. I am not certain that a modern bishop is very much above a mediæval abbot. Knowledge of material things seems to make very little difference.

"No more perfect specimens of womanhood were ever seen than Penelope or Nausicaa.

"The Romans under Trajan thought, no doubt, that they had progressed considerably since Cincinnatus followed the plough. But had they? Knowledge came, but wisdom lingered. The empire was going to pieces from the want of the neglected *αρετή*.

"Even, however, in the outward essentials of food and clothing and housing, it is not certain that the mass of mankind in the present generation are better off than their forefathers. Workmen and workmen's families have still a hard time of it. Nor do I know that between them and what are called the upper classes the feeling is better than it used to be. The enjoyments of life have always been unequally divided, and it is easy out of the imperfect records of earlier ages to draw pictures of tyranny and cruelty and the oppression of the weak by the strong; but the lot of the immense majority of mankind is not even now a delightful one. When the Paris Communists in 1870 burnt the Tuileries and the Hotel de Ville and threatened to burn Paris itself, Carlyle observed to me, 'Those people are saying to their rulers: "The conditions of our lives are intolerable. Our forefathers may have been as ill off as we, but at least they had another life to look forward to, when wrong would be made right. With your Intellect and your Progress, you have taken from us our last consolation; and if you will not mend this accursed society that we live in, if you tell us that in the nature of things we must have all the pain and you the pleasure—then, by heaven, we will destroy society and you and ourselves too, and so make an end."'

"I do not believe that the condition of the people in mediæval Europe was as miserable as is pretended. I do not believe that the distribution of the necessities of life was as unequal as it is at present. Of liberty, no doubt, there is a great deal more going now than there used to be. In the middle ages there was little liberty for any one. Kings and peers, knights and vassals, villains and serfs, were held together under strict bonds of obligation. But the one