

The aggregation of millions of people in a few great cities offers every facility for the utilization of discoveries and inventions, makes economy of labour easy, and the perfecting of manufacturing processes possible. The feverish competition of the age, the restless inquiry constantly going on, the triumphs of the past, the lessons failure and disappointment have taught, make it easy to achieve results never before possible. The mistakes of the gifted Greeks have taught us—in many respects greatly their inferiors—wisdom and caution. We possess the experience and accumulated wisdom of thousands of years.

And yet, alas, the picture is not without its sad tints. We can do what the scattered shepherds of the early world were incapable of conceiving. We can carry to the ends of the earth bloodshed, vice, and crime; our epicures can enlist the services of men and all races and climes. We can create an artificial appetite, and pander to it, as simpler races could not and would not have cared to do. We can do what the Normans, and races much less advanced, were debarred from attempting. We can do what the keen and subtle Greeks and the coarsely gluttonous Romans could not. Yes: in this refined and scientific age, in those parts of the world basking in the light of the Gospel of Love and Self-sacrifice, we can prepare beverages of a potency the old alchemists knew not of; we can prepare them in quantities that would have seemed incredible to the early Persian distillers. We can distribute these fluids to every part of the civilized world, at prices placing them within the reach of the poorest. We can, in short, in a hundred ways, do an amount of injury, ruder as well as more gifted races could never propose to themselves. But then, as a set-off, the diffusion of Christianity and the growth of science have taught the moral and physical evils of such conduct. With the bane has come the antidote. With almost unbounded powers for mischief we also possess a keener and truer perception of what is right and what wrong. Religion, and her handmaid, Science, make that unpardonable in us which in other races would have been excusable. Will the knowledge of the right be turned to its proper uses? Who but God alone can presume to answer?