

centuries before Christ in support of their attitude. And no wonder. The brilliance of that period, even at this distance, still dazzles the minds of men and bewilders their judgement. But what are the facts? The one significant fact is the extraordinary number of men of genius by whom the period is rendered illustrious. This is taken as proof of the unsurpassed point of advance reached by the Greeks of that exceptional time.

Now, it may be admitted that, for two or three generations about the age of Pericles, Greece produced, in proportion to its population, a larger number of great men than any other country has ever done during an equal period. But at the outset it must not be overlooked, as the most undeniable implication of this fact, that the human race had risen from its primitive barbarism to the culture of ancient Athens. Any doubt, therefore, as to the reality of human progress can merely touch the question, whether man has made any advance beyond that ancient type of culture.

But what is required to settle this doubt? It is not enough to point to the extraordinary proportion of eminent men which ancient Athens produced. That alone does not imply that humanity had then touched the highest point of its attainments and has made no advance since then. There is no real advance of humanity, as we have seen, unless a higher level is reached by the great body of the common people, and not merely by a few exceptional individuals. It has indeed been contended that the common people of Attica, at the time in question, represented a higher standard of intelligence and morality than has ever been since attained. Such a contention can of course be tested only by an elaborate examination of the extant literature of the period, such as is obviously far beyond our limits. But a few facts will indicate the insuperable difficulties which the contention has to face.

The comedies of Aristophanes, in general, furnish numerous materials for our purpose, but one is peculiarly apposite. It bears as its title the name of "Ploutos," the Wealth-God,