

things which fill earth and air and water, their mother Nature seems absolutely indifferent. She finishes a flower or a May-fly with a completeness which the most exquisite human skill can neither rival nor approach. She leaves the flowers to be gathered idly and flung away; the May-fly to be snatched up by the passing swallow. In her inexhaustible treasure-house she has myriads of the same kind waiting to be born. So it is with all things but man; and Mr. Buckle consistently says that man is no exception. He, too, thinks as little of this or that individual as the natural philosopher.

"It may be so.

"But there is this difference, that in those other things the important, or, if you will, the immortal, part of them is what they have in common with the rest of their tribe. But with man, so far as he is an object of interest, it is the type which is nothing, and the individual which is everything. Take away from Ulysses or Hamlet their personal individuality, and leave only what belongs to the race—would you say that you had reserved the immortal part and thrown away the unimportant? The immortal part of a man is not that which he shares with the rest of his race; but that which he possesses of his own.

"It may be that in the evolution of human beings there are some general processes, bodily, or mental, to which all alike may be subject. These science may perhaps discover, and so far there may be a science of History. But the relative importance of the general and particular is with man in the inverse ratio to the rest of nature. In poetry, in art, in religion, in action and life, the interest centres always on persons and personal character.

"We now hear less than we did of a science of History, and a less ambitious theory has taken its place—that the human race is in a state of progress which it is the pride and

duty of history to record—progress never surer or more exhilarating than in this very age in which we live. It is now seen clearly that each generation is necessarily wiser than the generation preceding, having inherited all that there was before, and added its own acquisitions. The old saying used to be that our fathers had more wit and wisdom than we. We say now, our fathers did well enough considering their disadvantages; but it would be affectation to pretend that we do not stand on a higher level than they did. Do we not know a thousand things of which they had no glimpse? Have we not made slaves of the elemental powers; bridged the ocean with fireships; made the lightning run our errands; measured the velocity of light? Are we not educating the poor, making them happier and better; and now that our eyes are opened, does not history assure us that what we witness is the consummation of a process which has gone on for ages and will continue indefinitely?

"Again, I can but say it may be so. Indisputably there is progress of a kind; but I am obliged to ask, whither? Progress from what to what? Is it so certain that in things most essential we are so much wiser than those who went before us? Once more the question rises: What is the meaning of human life? Is it that we may multiply our enjoyments and conveniences, and pursue more sharply and successfully what we call our interests? Is it that we are to make ourselves masters of the elements, search into the mysteries of nature, and use our discoveries to make existence more enjoyable? Or is all this only secondary—and is it our real business here to make ourselves brave, true, just, and honourable men?

"I hear people say impatiently, Of course we know all that. Of course