

The Dominion Review.

VOL. II.

NOV.-DEC., 1897.

NO. 11-12.

THE ILLUSION OF PROGRESS.

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To come into a reforming party like that of the Rationalists, and pen an article that may, in one way, be looked upon as a suggestion that reform is really unattainable, that the desire to reform is an inveterate illusion, and that in working for reform we are merely obeying an organic impulse which cannot be justified by cold reason, is perhaps a proceeding for which some apology may be required. We so instinctively work for what we consider will be the happiness of others that any suggestion that in so doing we are the victims of the irony of life will be regarded by earnest-minded men as a reprehensible incitement to apathy, as a counsel of indolence in face of the great and grievous suffering under which men groan. When talking this matter over among my own friends, arguing that the desire for reform is only an organic impulse, that it is a part of the irony of things, and that no adequate proof can be given that any given generation is happier than another (owing to the impossibility of finding an immutable standard of happiness), I have always been met with the rejoinder: "But, supposing your arguments to be unanswerable, is it not better to strive after reform, although we do not know whether the future world will be any happier for it, than not to strive at all? Are you not putting a weapon into the hands of the idle, the callous, the indifferent, the reactionary, by suggesting that reason can afford no justification for our attempts at reform?" If that be the criticism passed upon the present article by readers of it, I can only reply, as I have replied to my friends, that the truth is worth investigating for its own sake; that if one of the most important of the springs of our daily conduct is really an ironic delusion, it can do us no harm to know it, and to know our own selves better; and, finally, that, whatever verdict cold reason may pass upon warm impulse, in the present case, at any rate, impulse is the source of action; and that in spite of reflections such as those of the present paper, we are compelled, by the constitution of our nature, by