

Nor need we even go as far as this into the future. Have we any certainty that a slight deterioration in the seasons may not make our now temperate zones so unproductive as to be unable to support their vast population? May not another epidemic like the Black Death so prostrate us with its horrors, that the progress of the world will be stayed, and that the survivors will be forced to begin again the edifice which has collapsed under the breath of the destroying angel? In short, so many great physical changes are possible, which are colossal in their effects upon man, that such an engine as higher education, much as it may help man to overcome nature, may be entirely helpless to avert destruction. And in no case does the verdict of the highest physical science allow us to assume that, even without sudden catastrophes, our globe will retain for ever its present conditions of sustaining animal life. The ancients, therefore, without the aid of modern science, had surmised the truth, and spoken with more insight than the modern Optimist.

But Plato and his fellows were not thinking of these great physical cataclysms. They were thinking of human nature. They were persuaded that no purification devised by man could eradicate certain lawless or irrational elements in our nature—disturbing forces in our very constitution, which were sure in the long run to assert themselves, and overthrow any society, however wisely founded and carefully protected. They did not believe in the perfectibility of the masses, or of the lower races of man. The follies and the vices which reside in each individual, and which no human power can eradicate, are also in societies, and will affect them with fits of wickedness or of madness. A residuum of the 'ape and tiger' is there, and may

any day assert itself. Be it remembered that in forming this view the ancients were at no disadvantage as regards the help of science: they had human nature before them to analyse, and they had the long and varied experience of many centuries of civilised societies. They lived not in the youth of the world, but in its old age. Hundreds of political and social experiments had been tried, many with great success, all without absolute permanence. So they based their induction on large and solid grounds.

Is there any likelihood that they were wrong, and that we have discovered the elixir of social life, which will make age into youth and weakness into vigour? Alas! no. If any new force arose able to work this miracle, it was the advent of Christianity. Yet, even as its Founder prophesied that it would battle with its foes till the end of the world, and only attain its millennium by Divine and miraculous interference, so its historian can record that it has never yet mastered the beast-residuum in any society. It has as yet failed even to convince the majority of the world. It has also failed to eradicate from those who profess it the crimes and follies ingrained in every one of us, handed down to us in our very blood, weighing down our efforts with their grossness and their stubborn unreason. When therefore this great appeal in education and morals has found so partial and incomplete a response, is it likely that any system of secular training will be more successful? Is it conceivable that any society, however carefully educated, will free itself from vice and crime? The forms and types of lawlessness may change, the vices of the fashionable world—and they are not a few—may replace those of the slums; there will be at times a perceptible and cheering improvement; but then will come the fatal moment when some disaster,