

INTRODUCTION

NATIONS, like men, are travellers. Each one of them moves, through history, toward what we call progress and a new life or toward decay and death. As it is the first concern of every man to know that he is achieving something, advancing in material wealth, industrial power, intellectual strength and moral purpose, so it is vital to a nation to know that its years are milestones along the way of progress.

About this conviction centre much of our public thought, most of our public discussion, nearly all of our public action. The methods suggested or adopted may be mistaken; may, and indeed often do, lead in the wrong direction. But the aspiration is true and it is constant. It searches always among policies, devices, inventions and systems for the few broad ways that lead to a real advance all along the line. This is the ancient method of natural selection, by which men and nations have improved upon their own past.

Down to within a century this study of ways and means dealt almost wholly with abstractions. It sought to establish certain general principles and universal laws which, once put into words, would be as final for social activity as the rules of arithmetic are for the solving of its problems. These made up the