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PROGRESS

Through immeasurable ages our planet has been going one way: working out its problem of life. None but an external spectator could discern in it from century to century any perceptible movement. Some geologists give fifty million years from the Laurentian period to the early, Pleistocene. Marsupials and lemurs appear in the lower Eocene strata, supposed to be three million years old. Manlike apes come in the Miocene period nigh a million years ago. Then we have pithecanthropus, or erect man-ape, a quarter of a million years back, the herald of the human race. Think of that number of nights and days, in which our planet has been circling round the sun; where from æon to æon you see no hint of change, yet the change ever going on, change from simple to complex, from low to high, from amoeba to quadruped, from beast to man; from savagery to civilization, from the then to the now! And the movement always one way! Can we imagine that this age-long labour is all for nothing? That this eternal making is all for nothing but the final pleasure of destroying? To destroy is the lowest exercise of power. A petroleuse can burn down the Tuleries; she could not build one. The universe contains more intelligence, more moral value than a mere passion for destruction. A fool can kill; it takes a God to create. If the universe teaches us anything, its story is of an eternal progress, under the guidance of One greater than itself. But if we believe in progress let us be well assured what we mean by it. Man, in his efforts for betterment, is, we have tried to show, on the right track, following a cosmic movement which is not going to deceive him. But he follows it with varying success. He has to be taught by his mistakes, and he makes a good many. On the road he is continually meeting by-path meadows which lead to the prison of Giant Despair. In his hurry for sectional gain, he so often loses more than he wins. He seems to have to pay heavy discount on his every transaction. Take, for instance, our modern civilisation. Can we speak of that as in all respects a going on? Everything we do in it carries its drawback. We build the town and lose the robustness of the countryman. We invent the watch and lose the savage's instinct of time. We make roads and put up signposts and are lost, as the Indian never is, in the trackless forest.

Contrast the America of a hundred years ago with the America of to-day. Ours is the age of a thousand wonderful inventions, all of which are exploited to their utmost extent in the great republic. That we call progress. But what of the average human condition? A century ago the American population was hardy, frugal, industrious and well-to-do, living large-

ly on the land, with few bloated fortunes, but, on the other hand, no abject poverty. What is the spectacle to-day? According to Dr. Whiton, 1 per cent. of the population owns as much wealth as the remaining 99 per cent. In Boston during the year 1903 136,000 people, or 20 per cent. of the population, were assisted by the public authorities. One in every ten who die in New York is buried a pauper. The Times' New York correspondent recently stated that two thirds of the inhabitants of that city live in tenement houses that have over 350,000 living rooms, into which, because they are windowless, no ray of sunshine ever enters. The English story is not dissimilar; is, in some respects, even worse. Contrast the position of the Northern cloth-worker of the eighteenth century, as pictured then by Arthur Young, doing his work at home, with his lusty sons and daughters as assistants, all comfortably housed and fed, living in the open country; with that of the modern operative, housed in a Manchester slum, pallid, under-sized and shrunken, and you realize that our 'industrial progress' has not been all gain. We have yet to understand that progress, in any real sense, is a human progress—of body, soul and spirit—and not a machinery progress, or money progress.

We are full to-day of political progress, and it is well to know what we mean by it. Enthusiasts point us to the democratic movement, to Reform Bills, to the enfranchisement of the masses, the abolition of privilege, the lessening power of feudalism and the growing power of the toilers. We subscribe to all that, and to more in the same direction. We want a national well-being not the well-being of one class founded on the ill-being of another. But let us be quite clear on the point. Does anyone suppose we are on the way to betterment by simply putting one class in power in place of another? That by itself would be to substitute one greed for another, to substitute an old badness for a new one. An Australian correspondent of the present writer complains of the dominant working class out there as pursuing a purely class and selfish policy. Whether that be so or not, we are not anxious for this kind of development. There can be no political progress apart from the growth in us all, rulers and ruled, of a new spirit—the spirit which recognises power, not as a goal of ambition, as an opportunity of self-interest, but as a call to service for the welfare of the whole. A republic, said Montesquieu, must be founded on virtue. The State, observes Lasalle—and it is one of the best things he uttered—'shall be the institution in which the whole virtue of manhood shall realize itself.' The gist of it all is that political redemption, to be real, must move under a spiritual redemption. The nation will not move upward till its