

PROTECTION IN ITS RELATIONS TO PROGRESS.

About half a century ago certain German physiologists advanced the theory that progress, as far as the life of plants and animals is concerned, consisted essentially of change from homogeneity into heterogeneity of structure. Two familiar instances may give a tolerably clear idea of what they meant by this. The egg is seen at first to consist of but few parts—yolk, white, and shell—the latter the mere dead covering of the living matter within. With three weeks' subjection to a certain degree of heat (whether natural or artificial does not matter) the simple yolk and white, distinguishable into these two parts only, have become a chicken, with eyes, beak, feathers, claws, bones, and a complex system of vital organs. Out of a little mass of matter, alike throughout, a living creature of many diverse parts has been developed; and this is change from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous, from the condition of being all alike to the condition of having many different parts, different both in structure and in function. A grain of wheat, stripped of its dead covering, is seen to consist of a certain mixed but still homogeneous mass of starch and albumen, with some earthy salts. The bran, or outside covering, having been separated, the living seed consists of matter all alike, which we call flour when it has passed between the millstones. Let this seed be planted in the ground, under proper conditions, it becomes a plant, with roots, stalk, leaves, and finally a head containing many grains, repetitions of the original. This, again, is a change from likeness, or similarity all through, to a condition of great diversity—of composition of many and different parts. In his statement of the German theory of progress in plant and animal life, Herbert Spencer says that the series of changes gone through during the development of a seed into a tree, or of an ovum into an animal, constitutes an advance from homogeneity of structure to heterogeneity of structure. In its primary stage every germ consists of a substance that is uniform throughout, both in texture and chemical composition. The first step in its development is the appearance of a difference between two parts of this substance; or, as the phenomenon is described in physiological language—a differentiation. Each of these differentiated divisions presently begins itself to exhibit some contrast of parts, and by and by these secondary differentiations become as definite as the original one. This process is continuously repeated—is simultaneously going on in all parts of the growing embryo; and by endless multiplication of these differentiations there is ultimately produced that complex combination of tissues and organs constituting the adult animal or plant. This is the course of evolution followed by all organisms whatever. It is settled beyond dispute that organic progress consists in a change from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous.

Thus far Wolff and Von Baer, with the much-embracing intellectual reach of Goethe to sustain them, agree in the philosophy of the matter. But just a little over twenty-two years ago the great English "thinker" above mentioned announced a bold advance upon the German idea. He laid it down that the law of organic progress is the law of all progress. "Whether it be in the development of the Earth," he says, "in the development of Life upon its surface, in the development of Society, of Government, of Manufactures, of Commerce, of Language, Literature, Science, Art, this same evolution of the simple into the complex, through a process of continuous differentiation, holds throughout. From the earliest traceable cosmical changes down to the latest results of civilization, we shall find that the transformation of the homogeneous into that of the heterogeneous is that in which Progress essentially consists.

The English writer then goes on to put the sciences of astronomy, geology, and biology under contribution for proof of this universal progress. But he finds his strongest proof of all in the progress of the latest and most heterogeneous creature—man. "It is alike true," he continues, "that, during the period in which the Earth has been peopled, the human organism has become more heterogeneous among the civilized divisions of the species; and that the species, as a whole, has been growing more heterogeneous in virtue of the multiplication of races and the differentiation of these races from each other. * * * * * Even were we to admit the hypothesis that Mankind originated from several separate stocks, it would still be true that, as from each of these stocks there have sprung now widely different tribes which are proved by philological evidence to have had a common origin, the race as a whole is far less homogeneous than it was at first. Add to which that we have in the Anglo-Americans an example of a new variety arising within these few generations, and that, if we may trust to the descriptions of observers, we are likely soon to have another such example in Australia." We may here ask, Is there to be developed a Canadian variety of our own race, different in many respects, neither few nor unimportant, from both the Anglo-American and the Anglo-Australian?

But the part of Spencer's illustration of his alleged universal law which more immediately concerns us in this connection is that in which he speaks of a differentiation of a very familiar kind; that, namely, by which the mass of the community has become segregated into distinct classes and orders of workers. And this we had better have in his own words.

"While the governing part has been undergoing the complex development above described [in religion, politics, manners and fashion], the governed part has been undergoing an equally complex development, which has resulted in that minute division of labour characterizing advanced nations. It is needless to trace out this progress in its first stages, up through the caste divisions of the East and the incorporated guilds of Europe, to the elaborate producing and distributing organization existing among ourselves. Political economists have made familiar to all the evolution which, beginning with a tribe whose members severally perform the same actions each for himself, ends with a civilized community whose members severally perform different actions for each other; and they have further explained the evolution through which the solitary producer of any one commodity is transformed into a combination of producers who, united under a master, take separate parts in the manufacture of such commodity. But there are other and yet higher phases of this advance from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous in the industrial structure of the social organism. Long after considerable progress has been made in the division of labour among different classes of workers, there is still little or no division of labour among the widely separated portions of the community; the nation continues comparatively homogeneous in the respect that in each district the same occupations are pursued. But when roads and other means of transit become numerous and good, the different districts begin to assume different functions and to become mutually dependent. The calico manufacture locates itself in this county, the woollen-cloth manufacture in that; silks are produced here, lace there; stockings in one place, shoes in another; pottery, hardware, cutlery, come to have their special towns; and ultimately every locality becomes distinguished from the rest by the leading occupation carried on in it. *Any more, this subdivision of functions shows itself not only among the different parts of the same nation, but among different nations. That exchange of commodities which free trade promises so greatly to increase will ultimately have the effect of specializing in a greater or lesser degree the industry of each people.* So that, beginning with a barbarous tribe almost if not quite homogeneous in the functions of its members, the progress has been and still is towards an economic aggregation of the whole human race, growing ever more heterogeneous in respect of the separate functions assumed by separate nations, the separate functions assumed by the local sections of each nation, the separate functions assumed by the many kinds of makers and traders in each town, and the separate functions assumed by the workers united in producing each commodity."

I have marked, to be printed in italics, those portions of the quotation which I intend to dispute, and against which I propose to show cause. I take Spencer's statement because it is the strongest and clearest yet made of the theory of progress upon which Free Traders must rest their case to show that their system is in alliance with progress and not in opposition thereto. I admit division of labour between individuals; in other words, differentiation, which is progress. But I venture to advance this view, that while individuals are being differentiated, separated, told off into various occupations, the nations which are foremost in civilization are actually becoming more like each other. Has the great English philosopher (he must truly so be called) missed the point that the tendency towards segregation, specialization, differentiation, is vastly greater—with permissible use of language, I may say, *infinitely* greater—in the individual than in the nation? Has his zeal for the free trade and non-interference theory carried him beyond the facts? Does it not suggest something in this connection that, while the peasantry of Normandy, Provence, Sicily, Bavaria, Pomerania, Aberdeenshire, Tipperary and Yorkshire, differ from each other to a remarkable degree in costume, habits and general manner of living, the French, Italian, German, Scotch, Irish, and English gentlemen meet on almost common ground, and exchange common ideas and sympathies. The vulgar of each county or district speak in each a different *patois* or dialect, while the educated classes of any country speak the same language alike. A Kentish hop-picker, suddenly set down amid the din of a Lancashire cotton factory, could scarce understand the "lingo" of the "natives," it would for a time be almost the same as Dutch to him. The English clown speaks the dialect of "Coomber land" or "Zummerset," as the case may be, but university scholars speak simply English. Provincial peculiarities live long among the uneducated masses, but art, science, education, culture—say civilization, to include all, is cosmopolitan, or European at least. We see education—and surely that is progress—tending in the direction of likeness and similarity of development, while non-education—the lack of progress—perpetuates great and characteristic differences. Is it unreasonable to suppose that the power of education to diffuse among the higher classes of different countries great similarity of thought and feeling, has its analogue in the power of material progress to make all civilized nations more alike in their capacities of productions and manufacture? If progress consists in differentiation, is it not therefore in harmony with Protection, which aims to create diversity of employment—in one word—progress? The German peasant eats his "schwarzbrod," and the Italian peasant his maccaroni; they seem to have little in common, but the electrician in Berlin uses the same instruments and pursues the same path of scientific inquiry as his brother of Florence. These two instances may suggest hundreds more to anybody who counts himself one of "the reading public." Is there not a "missing link" somewhere in the Spencerian theory of industrial progress, as applied to *nations*? I venture to say that there is, and on another occasion I may face the arduous task of endeavouring to supply it.

Argus.