

CHAPTER IX

CONFLICTING TENDENCIES

Men work in order to enjoy; to promote this end they are impelled to enter into social relations with their fellows; the basic or animating principle of all social union is the reciprocal exchange of services; and trade is simply the means by which the advantages gained by living in social union is extended, and the exchange of services between individuals and communities is facilitated. Such are the conclusions to which our previous investigations have led us, and which we propose to accept as the basis for our further investigations.

The concluding paragraph of the previous paper, however, brings us face to face with one of those fundamental social or economic questions, our answer to which must necessarily tend to determine the main current of our social or political beliefs and aspirations, a brief consideration of which, moreover, seems to us necessary before we can proceed with the main subject of our inquiry. The question it raises may be formulated as follows —

Are the industrial interests of mankind, of different individuals and different communities, harmonious or antagonistic? Or, in other words, do the industrial instincts of men impel them toward war or toward peace, toward isolation or toward co-operation, toward separation or toward federation?

The importance of this question cannot well be overrated. If the industrial interests of mankind are naturally discordant, if they tend toward isolation and separation, then the very existence of society may be attributed either to coercion — the enslavement or enforcement of the weaker by the stronger — or to human ingenuity, inventiveness, and genius. On the other hand, if the industrial interests of mankind are naturally harmonious, if they tend to impel them toward co-operation and federation, then the existence of society, as well as its manifest tendency toward continuous expansion, may be attributed to the physiological constitution of man, to the demands of his material requirements, to his desire for comfort and his aversion to discomfort. If our simple analysis of production, of the causes impelling man to work and to enter into social relations with his fellows, has been correct, if it has taught us anything at all, it is that the industrial interests of mankind are naturally harmonious, that they directly impel mankind toward peace, co-operation, and federation. Hence, provisionally at least, any prevailing social, inter-communal and even international discord must be attributed to other causes, which hinder and limit the free play and full development of the industrial tendencies.

Now, besides and opposed to the industrial instincts and tendencies — the instincts

and tendencies due to and engendered by co-operation, by industrial life — there are others, due to the most coarse, cruel and, in the true sense of the word, brutal motives that can actuate mankind. These may fitly be termed the Predatory Instincts, including under this term those instincts that prompt men to prey upon their fellows, to deprive them by force or fraud of their possessions, their personal freedom, even of their lives. These instincts were probably the primitive instincts of the race, are the instincts indicating the line of its descent. Certain it is that they were predominant in the early history of mankind: in primitive times the stronger or more cunning killed off the weaker; in more recent times they only enslaved them. These instincts, too, tended to co-operation; they united the members of the same tribe by the ties of a common purpose; but they also and more strongly tended to isolation and separation, to keep the different tribes at enmity. From time immemorial down to our own times, the stronger people have always been conquering the weaker; the greatest efforts of mankind have been directed to improvements in the art of war; every increase in knowledge, in our command over Nature, has been pressed into the service of war; and the majority of wars may be traced directly to the predatory instincts of the race.

Though the influence of both may be observed in every society, indeed, in every human being, the industrial instincts and the predatory instincts are the direct antithesis of each other. The one prompts man to serve his fellows in order to be able to command counter-services; the other, to prey upon them, to seek advantages which will give him power over their lives and liberties, which will enable him to command their unrequited services. The one impels him to ask himself, What can I do for my fellows? the other, What can I get from my fellows? The one inspires men to do unto others as they would have others do unto them; to expect from others only what they are prepared themselves to concede to others.¹ The other instigates them to enforce their own desires, regardless of the rights of others, to make Might the test of Right, and to demand from the weak, or the few, obedience to the will of the strong, or the many. The one impels mankind to transform a wilderness into a garden; the other, to transform a garden into a waste. Co-operation, Civilisation, Peace, and Progress, such are the typical fruits of the industrial instincts; Slavery, Devastation, War, and Poverty, such are the typical fruits of the predatory instincts.

¹ Expect from others only what you yourself are prepared to concede to others, seems to us as sound a principle of peaceful social life, though by no means so beautiful, as the immortal golden rule of righteousness: "Do unto others as you would that others should do unto you," of which, indeed, it is but an inversion. The one informs us what each can justly expect from others; the other, what each may justly do unto others. The Age of Conflict, of Force, of War, from which we have not yet fully emerged, seems to have been the necessary preliminary to the Age of Reason, of Justice, of Peace, into which we have not yet fully entered. Civilisation, as many contend, may

have been advanced by war; but its essential element is to promote peace and harmony between individuals and nations, to establish that feeling of security of life, liberty, and property, which is a necessary condition of individual happiness and of social prosperity. Moreover, strange as it may appear, the Nemesis of History is such that even the very conquests of the stronger Predatory Tribes, or Nations, tend to eradicate the predatory instincts, to prepare the way for the ultimate triumph of Industry, of the Industrial Character and the Industrial Tendencies. For by such conquests the predatory instincts of the conquered, of a large and ever-increasing number of men, are restrained by the conquerors. Warlike pursuits, by which these instincts are both indulged and developed, are denied them, and coercion or necessity impels their activities into more peaceful channels, which inevitably tends to the development of more peaceful instincts. On the other hand, by such conquests Society is divided into two classes; into Conquerors and Conquered, Freemen and Slaves, Lords and Serfs, the Privileged and the Disinherited. In the infancy of modern Nations such Conquerors formed the governing classes; they imposed their will on the rest of the community. The Conquerors were, in short, "the State," the Freemen, the Lords, the Privileged; the Conquered were the People, the Slaves, the Serfs, the Disinherited. These latter existed for "the State"; not, as is now so loudly proclaimed, the State for the People. The development of Industry, of peaceful and harmonious social life, was hindered, its tendencies checked, and the industrial classes exploited for the benefit of the Conquerors. High above the mediaeval market-place loomed the huge castle, with its dark dungeons, its oubliettes for the "unruly," for those who sinned against the customs or prejudices of its aristocratic owner; and in its shadow neither freedom, nor property, nor life itself, was secure. Labour may be, as the Seer of Chelsea so earnestly preached, the one blessed, God-like thing in the Universe; but under bondage to Privilege, to Mammon, "the rational soul of it not yet awakened," it cannot demonstrate the blessings to humanity wherewith it is laden.

In course of time, adaptation being one of the main characteristics of all organic life, society adapts itself to the enforced conditions, the privileges of the Conquerors become recognised by the conquered, and institutions at first based on force and maintained by force tend to become customary, to be established and maintained by Law. For the tendency of mankind is to cling to the social conditions into which they are born, to continue the social garment into which they have grown. All history teaches that it is only when the material conditions of the masses become positively unendurable, or that wide-spread aspirations are irreconcilable with prevailing social or political conditions, that we have those violent social upheavals which are the milestones in the social and political development of Nations, and without the possibility of which it would almost seem as if social progress were impossible.

Human laws and regulations, however, being simply habits and customs crystallised

into form and made obligatory on all, necessarily reflect the character, the moral feelings and personal desires, of those who have the power to formulate and enforce them, whether these be few or many. Where these would enslave their fellows, we find laws legalising slavery.¹ Where these desire to benefit by the labours of their fellowcitizens without themselves being called upon to render counter-services — where, in short, these would be "rich," in the current meaning of this term — we find laws rendering this possible, even if tending to the impoverishment, to the physical, mental, and spiritual degradation of the rest of the community.² And when those who have the power to formulate and enforce Laws, desire Justice, when they only desire to reap the harvest of their own labours, then there will be laws and institutions preventing any and all from infringing on the rights, on the equal liberties of their fellows.

1As Maine expresses it: "The simple wish to use the bodily powers of another person as a means of ministering to one's own ease or pleasure is doubtless the foundation of Slavery, and as old as human nature" ("Ancient Law," p. 164). So long as this desire dominates the characters of those possessing the power to formulate and enforce laws, slavery will continue to exist, even if called by other names and veiled under specious social institutions. The institutions and laws of a country will always reflect the character of its inhabitants, and be a gauge of the degree of enlightenment and civilisation to which it has attained.

2 Bearing on this point, the following contention of Professor Thorold Rogers is most interesting and instructive. He says: "I contend that from 1563 to 1824, a conspiracy concocted by law and carried out by parties interested in its success was entered into, to cheat the English workman of his wages, to tie him to the soil, to deprive him of hope, and to degrade him into irremediable poverty. For more than two centuries and a half, the English Law, and those who administered the Law, were engaged in grinding the English workman down to the lowest pittance, in stamping out every expression or act which indicated any organised discontent, and in multiplying penalties upon him when he thought of his natural rights." — "Six Centuries of Work and Wages," p. 398,

Modern social institutions, however, are but the direct evolutionary product of mediaeval despotism; they are but the relics, pruned and shaped, or rather veneered, in accordance with modern sentiment, of the time when the predatory classes, as opposed to the industrial classes, were the ruling classes, the predatory instincts the predominant instincts, and Might was the only test of Right. Hence we may reasonably suspect that they still bear traces of their barbarous origin; that they still tend to advantage some at the cost and to the detriment of the rest, to exploit the industrial for the benefit of the privileged classes; that they are preventing all from enjoying the advantages of liberty, as of its corollary justice; and that they are hindering the full development and free play of the industrial tendencies, depriving

mankind of the possibility of attaining that golden age of peace, prosperity, and justice, which is the dream and aspiration of all enlightened men.