

CHAPTER XXII.

CONCLUSION.

HERE, it seems to me, is the gist and meaning of the great social problems of our time: More is given to us than to any people at any time before; and, *therefore*, more is required of us. We have made, and still are making, enormous advances on material lines. It is necessary that we commensurately advance on moral lines. Civilization, as it progresses, *requires* a higher conscience, a keener sense of justice, a warmer brotherhood, a wider, loftier, truer public spirit. Failing these, civilization must pass into destruction.) It cannot be maintained on the ethics of savagery. For civilization knits men more and more closely together, and constantly tends to subordinate the individual to the whole, and to make more and more important social conditions.

(The social and political problems that confront us are darker than they realize who have not given thought to them; yet their solution is a mere matter of the proper adjustment of social forces.) Man masters material nature by studying her laws, and in conditions and powers that seemed most forbidding, has already found his richest storehouses and most powerful servants. Although we have but begun to systematize our knowledge of physical nature, it is evident she will refuse us no desire if we but seek its gratification in accordance with her laws.

And that faculty of adapting means to ends which has enabled man to convert the once impassable ocean into his highway, to transport himself with a speed which leaves the swallow behind, to annihilate space in the communication of his thoughts, to convert the rocks into warmth and light and power and material for a thousand uses, to weigh the stars and analyze the sun, to make ice under the equator, and bid flowers bloom in Northern winters, will also, if he will use it, enable him to overcome social difficulties and avoid social dangers. The domain of law is not confined to physical nature. It just as certainly embraces the mental and moral universe, and social growth and social life have their laws as fixed as those of matter and of motion. Would we make social life healthy and happy, we must discover those laws, and seek our ends in accordance with them.

I ask no one who may read this book to accept my views. I ask him to think for himself.

Whoever, laying aside prejudice and self-interest, will honestly and carefully make up his own mind as to the causes and the cure of the social evils that are so apparent, does, in that, the most important thing in his power toward their removal. (This primary obligation devolves upon us individually, as citizens and as men.) Whatever else we may be able to do, this must come first. For "if the blind lead the blind, they both shall fall into the ditch."

(Social reform is not to be secured by noise and shouting; by complaints and denunciation; by the formation of parties, or the making of revolutions; but by the awakening of thought and the progress of ideas.) Until there be correct thought, there cannot be right action; and when there is correct thought, right action *will* follow. (Power is always in the hands of the masses of men. What oppresses the masses is their own ignorance, their own short-sighted selfishness.)

(The great work of the present for every man, and every organization of men, who would improve social conditions, is the work of education—the propagation of ideas.) It is only as it aids this that anything else can avail. And in this work every one who can think may aid—first by forming clear ideas himself, and then by endeavoring to arouse the thought of those with whom he comes in contact.

Many there are, too depressed, too embruted with hard toil and the struggle for animal existence, to think for themselves. Therefore the obligation devolves with all the more force on those who can. If thinking men are few, they are for that reason all the more powerful. (Let no man imagine that he has no influence. Whoever he may be, and wherever he may be placed, the man who thinks becomes a light and a power.) That for every idle word men may speak they shall give an account at the day of judgment, seems a hard saying. But what more clear than that the theory of the persistence of force, which teaches us that every movement continues to act and react, must apply as well to the universe of mind as to that of matter? Whoever becomes imbued with a noble idea kindles a flame from which other torches are lit, and influences those with whom he comes in contact, be they few or many. How far that influence, thus perpetuated, may extend, it is not given to him here to see. But it may be that the Lord of the Vineyard will know.

As I said in the first of these chapters, the progress of civilization necessitates the giving of greater and greater attention and intelligence to public affairs. And for this reason I am convinced that we make a great mistake in depriving one sex of voice in public matters, and that we could in no way so increase the attention, the intelligence and the devotion which may be brought to the solution of social problems as by enfranchising our women. Even

if in a ruder state of society the intelligence of one sex suffices for the management of common interests, the vastly more intricate, more delicate and more important questions which the progress of civilization makes of public moment, require the intelligence of women as of men, and that we never can obtain until we interest them in public affairs. And I have come to believe that very much of the inattention, the flippancy, the want of conscience, which we see manifested in regard to public matters of the greatest moment, arises from the fact that we debar our women from taking their proper part in these matters. Nothing will fully interest men unless it also interests women. There are those who say that women are less intelligent than men; but who will say that they are less influential?

And I am firmly convinced, as I have already said, that to effect any great social improvement, it is sympathy rather than self-interest, the sense of duty rather than the desire for self-advancement, that must be appealed to. Envy is akin to admiration, and it is the admiration that the rich and powerful excite which secures the perpetuation of aristocracies. Where tenpenny Jack looks with contempt upon ninepenny Joe, the social injustice which makes the masses of the people hewers of wood and drawers of water for a privileged few, has the strongest bulwarks. It is told of a certain Florentine agitator that when he had received a new pair of boots, he concluded that all popular grievances were satisfied. How often do we see this story illustrated anew in working-men's movements and trade-union struggles? This is the weakness of all movements that appeal only to self-interest.

And as man is so constituted that it is utterly impossible for him to attain happiness save by seeking the happiness of others, so does it seem to be of the nature of things that individuals and classes can obtain their own just

rights only by struggling for the rights of others.) To illustrate: When workmen in any trade form a trades-union, they gain, by subordinating the individual interests of each to the common interests of all, the power of making better terms with employers. But this power goes only a little way when the combination of the trades-union is met and checked by the pressure for employment of those outside its limits. No combination of workmen can raise their own wages much above the level of ordinary wages. The attempt to do so is like the attempt to bail out a boat without stopping up the seams. For this reason, it is necessary, if workmen would accomplish anything real and permanent for themselves, not merely that each trade should seek the common interests of all trades, but that skilled workmen should address themselves to those general measures which will improve the condition of unskilled workmen. Those who are most to be considered, those for whose help the struggle must be made, if labor is to be enfranchised, and social justice won, are those least able to help or struggle for themselves, those who have no advantage of property or skill or intelligence, —the men and women who are at the very bottom of the social scale. In securing the equal rights of these we shall secure the equal rights of all.

(Hence it is, as Mazzini said, that it is around the standard of duty rather than around the standard of self-interest that men must rally to win the rights of man. And herein may we see the deep philosophy of Him who bade men love their neighbors as themselves.)

In that spirit, and in no other, is the power to solve social problems and carry civilization onward.