

THE DIFFERENCE OF MAN CLAUDE BUCK

GRANTED that man is only a more highly developed animal; that the ring-tailed monkey is a distant relative who has gradually developed acrobatic tendencies, and the hump-backed whale a far-off connection who in early life took to the sea—granted that back of these he is kin to the vegetable, and is still subject to the same laws as plants, fishes, birds, and beasts. Yet there is still this difference between man and all other animals—he is the only animal whose desires increase as they are fed; the only animal that is never satisfied. The wants of every other living thing are uniform and fixed. The ox of to-day aspires to no more than did the ox when man first yoked him. The sea gull who poises himself above the swift steamer wants no better food or lodging than the gulls who circled round Caesar's galleys. Of all that nature offers them, be it ever so abundant, all living things save man can only take, and only care for, enough to supply wants which are definite and fixed. The

only use they can make of additional supplies or additional opportunities is to multiply.

But not so with man. No sooner are his animal wants satisfied, than new wants arise. Food he wants first, as does the beast; shelter next, as does the beast; and these given, his reproductive instincts assert their sway, as do those of the beast. But here man and beast part company. The beast never goes further; the man has but set his feet on the first step of an infinite progression—a progression upon which the beast never enters; a progression away from and above the beast.

The demand for quantity once satisfied, he seeks quality. The very desires that he has in common with the beast become extended, refined, exalted. It is not merely hunger, but taste, that seeks gratification in food; in clothes, he seeks not merely comfort, but adornment; the rude shelter becomes a house; the indiscriminating sexual attraction begins to transmute itself into subtle influences, and the hard and common stock of animal life to blossom and to bloom into shapes of delicate beauty. As power to gratify his wants increases, so does aspiration grow. Held down to lower levels of desire, twelve boars turn on spits that Antony's mouthful of meat may be done to a turn, and every kingdom of Nature is ransacked to add to Cleopatra's charms. Passing into higher forms of desire, that which slumbered in the plant and fitfully stirred in the beast, awakes in the man. The eyes of the mind are opened, and he longs to know. He braves the scorching heat of the desert and the icy blasts of the polar sea, but not for food; he watches all night, but it is to trace the circling of the eternal stars. He adds toil to toil, to gratify a hunger no animal has felt; to assuage a thirst no beast can know.

Out upon nature, in upon himself, back through the mists that shroud the past, forward into the

darkness that overhangs the future, turns the restless desire that arises when the animal wants slumber in satisfaction. Beneath things, he seeks the law; he would know how the globe was forged and the stars were hung; and trace to their origins the springs of life. And, then, as the man develops his nobler nature, there arises the desire higher yet—the passion of passions, the hope of hopes—the desire that he, even he, may somehow aid in making life better and brighter, in destroying want and sin, sorrow and shame. He masters and curbs the animal; he turns his back upon the feast and renounces the place of power; he leaves it to others to accumulate wealth, to gratify pleasant tastes, to bask themselves in the warm sunshine of the brief day. He works for those he never saw and never can see; for a fame, or may be but for a scant justice, that can only come long after the clods have rattled upon his coffin lid. He toils in the advance, where it is cold, and there is little cheer from men, and the stones are sharp and the brambles thick. Amid the scoffs of the present and the sneers that stab like knives, he builds for the future; he cuts the trail that progressive humanity may hereafter broaden into a highroad. Into higher, grander spheres desire mounts and beckons, and a star that rises in the east leads him on. The pulses of the man throb with the yearnings of the god.

Is not the gulf too wide for the analogy to span? Give more food, open fuller conditions of life, and the vegetable or animal can but multiply; the man will develop. In the one the expansive force can but extend existence in new numbers; in the other, it will inevitably tend to extend existence in higher forms and wider powers. Man is an animal; but he is an animal plus something else. He is the mythic earth tree, whose roots are in the ground, but whose topmost branches may blossom in the heavens.—Henry George in "Progress and Poverty"