CHAPTER III.

The Past and the Present.

§ 1.

I.

HAVING reached the limits of this long review, we can now survey as a whole the aggregate of English civilisation: everything is connected there: a few primitive powers and circumstances have produced the rest, and we have only to pursue their continuous action in order to comprehend the nation and its history, its past and its present. At the beginning and far away in the region of causes, comes the race. A whole people, Angles and Saxons, destroyed, drove away, or enslaved the old inhabitants, wiped out the Roman culture, settled by themselves and unmixed, and, amongst the later Danish pirates, only encountered a new reinforcement of the same blood. This is the primitive stock: from its substance and innate properties is to spring almost the whole future growth. At this time and as they then were, alone in their island, the Angles and Saxons attained a development such as it was, rough, brutal, and yet solid. They ate and drank, built and cleared the land, and, in particular, multiplied; the scattered tribes who crossed the sea in leather boats, became a strong compact nation,—three hundred thousand families, rich, with store of
cattle, abundantly provided with corporal subsistence, partly at rest in the security of social life, with a king, respected and frequent assemblies, good judicial customs; here, amidst the fire and vehemence of barbarian temperament, the old Germanic fidelity held men together, whilst the old Germanic independence, held them upright. In all else they barely advanced. A few fragmentary songs, an epic in which still are to be found traces of the warlike excitement of ancient barbarism, gloomy hymns, a harsh and fierce poetry, sometimes sublime and always rude,—this is all that remains of them. In six centuries they had scarcely gone one step beyond the manners and sentiments of their uncivilised Germany: Christianity, which obtained a hold on them by the greatness of its biblical tragedies and the troubled sadness of its aspirations, did not bring to them a Latin civilisation: this remained outside, hardly accepted by a few great men, deformed, when it did enter, by the difference between the Roman and Saxon genius—always altered and reduced; so much so, that for the men of the Continent these islanders were but illiterate dullards, drunkards, and gluttons; at all events, savage and slow by mood and nature, rebellious against culture, and sluggish in development.

The empire of this world belongs to force. These people were conquered for ever and permanently,—conquered by Normans, that is, by Frenchmen more clever, more quickly cultivated and organised than they. This is the great event which was to complete their character, decide their history, and stamp upon character and history an impress of the political and practical spirit which separates them from other German nations. Oppressed, enclosed in the unyielding meshes
of Norman organisation, they were not destroyed although they were conquered, they were on their own soil, each with his friends and in his tithings; they formed a body; they were yet twenty times more numerous than their conquerors. Their situation and their necessities create their habits and their aptitudes. They endure, protest, struggle, resist together and unanimously; strive to-day, to-morrow, daily, not to be slain or plundered, to restore their old laws, to obtain or extort guarantees; and they gradually acquire patience, judgment, all the faculties and inclinations by which liberties are maintained and states are founded. By a singular good fortune, the Norman lords assist them in this; for the king has secured to himself so much, and is so formidable, that, in order to repress the great pillager, the lesser ones are forced to make use of their Saxon subjects, to ally themselves with them, to give them a share in their charters, to become their representatives, to admit them into Parliament, to leave them to labour freely, to grow rich, to acquire pride, strength, authority, to interfere with themselves in public affairs. Thus, then, gradually the English nation, struck down by the Conquest to the ground, as if with a mace, extricates and raises itself; five hundred years and more being occupied in this re-elevation. But, during all this time, leisure failed for refined and lofty culture: it was needful to live and defend themselves, to dig the ground, spin wool, practise the bow, attend public meetings, serve on juries, to contribute and argue for common interests: the important and respected man is he who knows how to fight well and to gain much money. It was the energetic and warlike manners which were developed, the active and positive spirit
which predominated; learning and elegance were left to the Gallicised nobles of the court. When the valiant Saxon townsfolk quitted bow and plough, it was to feast copiously, or to sing the ballad of "Robin Hood." They lived and acted; they did not reflect or write; their national literature was reduced to fragments and rudiments, harpers' songs, tavern epics, a religious poem, a few books on religious reformation. At the same time Norman literature faded; separated from the stem, and on a foreign soil, it languished in imitations; only one great poet, almost French in mind, quite French in style, appeared, and, after him, as before him, we find helpless drivel. For the second time, a civilisation of five centuries became sterile in great ideas and works; this still more so than its neighbours, and for a twofold reason,—because to the universal impotence of the Middle-ages was added the impoverishment of the Conquest, and because of the two component literatures, one transplanted, became abortive, and the other, mutilated, ceased to expand.

II.

But amongst so many attempts and trials a character was formed, and the rest was to spring from it. The barbarous age established on the soil a German race, phlegmatic and grave, capable of spiritual emotions and moral discipline. The feudal age imposed on this race habits of resistance and association, political and utilitarian prepossessions. Fancy a German from Hamburg or Bremen confined for five hundred years in the iron corset of William the Conqueror: these two natures, one innate, the other acquired.
constitute all the springs of his conduct. So it was in other nations. Like runners drawn up in line at the entrance of the arena, we see at the epoch of the Renaissance the five great peoples of Europe start, though we are unable at first to foresee anything of their career. At first sight it seems as if accidents or circumstances will alone regulate their speed, their fall, and their success. It is not so: from themselves alone their history depends: each nation will be the artisan of its fortune; chance has no influence over events so vast; and it is national tendencies and faculties which, overturning or raising obstacles, will lead them, according to their fate, each one to its goal,—some to the extreme of decadence, others to the height of prosperity. After all, man is ever his own master and his own slave. At the outset of every age he in a certain fashion is: his body, heart, mind have a distinct structure and disposition: and from this lasting arrangement, which all preceding centuries have contributed to consolidate or to construct, spring permanent desires or aptitudes, by which he determines and acts. Thus is formed in him the ideal model, which, whether obscure or distinct, complete or rough-hewn, will henceforth float before his eyes, rally all his aspirations, efforts, forces, and will cause him to aim for centuries at one effect, until at length, renewed by impotence or success, he conceives a new goal, and assumes new energy. The Catholic and enthusiastic Spaniard figures life like the Crusaders, lovers, knights, and abandoning labour, liberty, and science, casts himself, in the wake of the inquisition, and his king, into fanatical war, romanesque slothfulness, superstitious and impassioned obedience, voluntary and incurable ignorance.1

1 See the Travels of Madame d'Aulnay in Spain, at the end of the
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The theological and feudal German settles in his district docilely and faithfully under his petty chief, through natural patience and hereditary loyalty, engrossed by his wife and household, content to have conquered religious liberty, clogged by the dulness of his temperament in gross physical existence, and in sluggish respect for established order. The Italian, the most richly gifted and precocious of all, but, of all, the most incapable of voluntary discipline and moral austerity, turns towards the fine arts and voluptuousness, declines, deteriorates beneath foreign rule, takes life at its easiest, forgetting to think, and satisfied to enjoy. The sociable and levelling Frenchman rallies round his king, who secures for him public peace, external glory, the splendid display of a sumptuous court, a regular administration, a uniform discipline, a predominating influence in Europe, and universal literature. So, if we look at the Englishman in the sixteenth century, we shall find in him the inclinations and the powers which for three centuries are to govern his culture and shape his constitution. In this European expansion of natural existence and pagan literature we find at first in Shakspeare, Ben Jonson, and the tragic poets, in Spenser, Sidney, and the lyric poets, the national features, all with incomparable depth and splendour, and such as race and history have impressed and implanted in them for a thousand years. Not in vain did invasion settle here so serious a race, capable of reflection. Not in vain did the Conquest turn this race toward seventeenth century. Nothing is more striking than this revolution, if we compare it with the times before Ferdinand the Catholic, namely, the reign of Henry IV., the great power of the nobles, and the independence of the towns. Read about this history, Budge's History of Civilization, 1865, 3 vols., ii. ch. viii.
warlike life and practical preoccupations. From the first rise of original invention, its work displays the tragic energy, the intense and disorderly passion, the disdain of regularity, the knowledge of the real, the sentiment of inner things, the natural melancholy, the anxious divination of the obscure beyond,—all the instincts which, forcing man upon himself, and concentrating him within himself, prepare him for Protestantism and combat. What is this Protestantism which establishes itself? What is this ideal model which it presents; and what original conception is to furnish to this people its permanent and dominant poem? The harshest and most practical of all,—that of the Puritans, which, neglecting speculation, falls back upon action, encloses human life in a rigid discipline, imposes on the soul continuous efforts, prescribes to society a cloisteral austerity, forbids pleasure, commands action, exacts sacrifice, and forms a moralist, a labourer, a citizen. Thus is it implanted, the great English idea—I mean the conviction that man is before all a free and moral personage, and that, having conceived alone in his conscience and before God the rule of his conduct, he must employ himself entirely in applying it within himself, beyond himself, obstinately, inflexibly, by offering a perpetual resistance to others, and imposing a perpetual restraint upon himself. In vain will this idea at first bring discredit upon itself by its transports and its tyranny; weakened by practice, it will gradually accommodate itself to humanity, and, carried from Puritan fanaticism to laic morality, it will win all public sympathy, because it answers to all the national instincts. In vain it will vanish from high society, under the scorn of the Restora-
tion, and the importation of French culture; it subsists underground. For French culture did not come to a head in England: on this too alien soil it produced only unhealthy, coarse, or imperfect fruit. Refined elegance became low debauchery; hardly expressed doubt became brutal atheism; tragedy failed, and was but declamation; comedy grew shameless, and was but a school of vice; of this literature, there remained only studies of close reasoning and good style; it was driven from the public stage, together with the Stuarts, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and liberal and moral maxims resumed the ascendancy, which they will not again lose. For, with ideas, events have followed their course: national inclinations have done their work in society as in literature; and the English instincts have transformed the constitution and politics at the same time as the talents and minds. These rich tithings, these valiant yeomen, these rude, well-armed citizens, well fed, protected by their juries, wont to reckon on themselves, obstinate, combative, sensible, such as the English Middle-ages bequeathed them to modern England, did not object if the king practised his temporary tyranny on the classes above them, and oppressed the nobility with a rigorous, despotism which the recollection of the Civil Wars and the danger of high treason justified. But Henry VIII, and Elizabeth herself were obliged to follow in great interests the current of public opinion: if they were strong, it was because they were popular; the people only supported their designs, and authorised their violences, because they found in them defenders of their religion, and the protectors of their labour.¹ The people themselves

¹ Buckle, History of Civilisation, i. ch. vii.
became immersed in this religion, and, from under a State-church, attained to personal belief. They grew rich by toil, and under the first Stuart already occupied the highest place in the nation. At this moment everything was decided: whatever happened, they must one day become masters. Social situations create political situations; legal constitutions always accommodate themselves to real things; and acquired preponderance infallibly results in written rights. Men so numerous, so active, so resolute, so capable of keeping themselves, so disposed to educe their opinions from their own reflection, and their subsistence from their own efforts, will under all circumstances seize the guarantees which they need. At the first onset, and in the ardour of primitive faith, they overturn the throne, and the current which bears them is so strong, that, in spite of their excess and their failure, the Revolution is accomplished by the abolition of feudal tenures, and the institution of 

_Habeas Corpus_ under Charles II.; by the universal upheaving of the liberal and Protestant spirit, under James II.; by the establishment of the constitution, the act of toleration, the freedom of the press, under William III. From that moment England had found her proper place; her two interior and hereditary forces—moral and religious instinct, practical and political aptitude—had done their work, and were henceforth to build, without impediment or destruction, on the foundation which they had laid.

III.

Thus was the literature of the eighteenth century born, altogether conservative, useful, moral, and limited.
Two powers direct it, one European, the other English: on one side a talent of oratorical analysis and habits of literary dignity, which belong to a classical age; on the other, a taste for application and an energy of precise observation, which are peculiar to the national mind. Hence that excellence and originality of political satire, parliamentary discourse, solid essays, moral novels, and all kinds of literature which demand an attentive good sense, a correct good style, and a talent for advising, convincing, or wounding others. Hence that weakness or impotence of speculative thought, of genuine poetry, of original drama, and of all the kinds which require a grand, free curiosity, or a grand, disinterested imagination. The English did not attain complete elegance, nor superior philosophy; they dulled the French refinements which they copied, and were terrified by the French boldness which they suggested; they remained half cockneys and half barbarians; they only invented insular ideas and English ameliorations, and were confirmed in their respect for their constitution and their tradition. But, at the same time, they cultivated and reformed themselves: their wealth and comfort increased enormously; literature and opinion became severe and even intolerant; their long war against the French Revolution caused their morality to become strict and even immoderate; whilst the invention of machinery developed their comfort and prosperity a hundredfold. A salutary and despotic code of approved maxims, established proprieties, and unassailable beliefs, which fortifies, strengthens, curbs, and employs man usefully and painfully, without permitting him ever to deviate or grow weak; a minute apparatus, and an
admirable provision of commodious inventions, associations, institutions, mechanisms, implements, methods, which incessantly co-operate to furnish body and mind with all which they need,—such are henceforth the leading and special features of this people. To constrain themselves and to provide for themselves, to govern themselves and nature, to consider life as moralists and economists, like a close garment, in which people must walk becomingly, and like a good garment, the best to be had, to be at once respectable and comfortable: these two words embrace all the main-springs of English actions. Against this limited good sense, and this pedantic austerity, a revolt broke out. With the universal renewal of thought and imagination, the deep poetic source, which flowed in the sixteenth century, seeks anew an outlet in the nineteenth, and a fresh literature springs up; philosophy and history infiltrate their doctrines into the old establishment; the greatest poet of the time shocks it incessantly with his curses and sarcasms; from all sides, to this day, in science and letters, in practice and theory, in private and in public life, the most powerful minds endeavour to open up a new channel to the stream of continental ideas. But they are patriots as well as innovators, conservative as well as revolutionary; if they touch religion and constitution, manners and doctrines, it is to widen, not to destroy them: England is made; she knows it, and they know it. Such as this country is, based on the whole national history and on all the national instincts, it is more capable than any other people in Europe of transforming itself without recasting, and of devoting itself to its future without renouncing its past.
§ 2.

I.

I began to perceive these ideas when I first landed in England, and I was singularly struck how they were corroborated by observation and history; it seemed to me that the present was completing the past, and the past explained the present.

At first the sea troubles and strikes a man with wonder; not in vain is a people insular and maritime, especially with such a sea and such coasts; their painters, not very gifted, perceive, in spite of all, its alarming and gloomy aspect; up to the eighteenth century, amidst the elegance of French culture, and under the joviality of Flemish tradition, we will find in Gainsborough the ineffaceable stamp of this great sentiment. In pleasant moments, in the fine calm summer days, the moist fog stretches over the horizon its pearl-grey veil; the sea has a pale slate colour; and the ships, spreading their canvas, advance patiently through the mist. But let us look around, and we will soon see the signs of daily peril. The coast is eaten out, the waves have encroached, the trees have vanished, the earth is softened by incessant showers, the ocean is here, ever intractable and fierce. It growls and bellows eternally, that old hoarse monster; and the barking pack of its waves advances like an endless army, before which all human force must give way. Think of the winter months, the storms, the long hours of the tempest-tossed sailor whirled about blindly by the squalls! Now, and in this fine season, over the whole circle of the horizon, rise the dull, wan, clouds, soon like the smoke of a coal-fire, some of a frail and dazzling
white, so swollen that they seem ready to burst. Their heavy masses creep slowly along; they are gorged, and already here and there on the limitless plain a patch of sky is shrouded in a sudden shower. After an instant, the sea becomes dirty and cadaverous; its waves leap with strange gambols, and their sides take an oily and livid tint. The vast grey dome drowns and hides the whole horizon; the rain falls, close and pitiless. We cannot have an idea of it, until we have seen it. When the southern men, the Romans, came here for the first time, they must have thought themselves in the infernal regions. The wide space between earth and sky, and on which our eyes dwell as their domain, suddenly fails; there is no more air, we see but a flowing mist. No more colours or forms. In this yellowish smoke, objects look like fading ghosts; nature seems a bad crayon-drawing, over which a child has awkwardly smeared his sleeve. Here we are at Newhaven, then at London; the sky disgorges rain, the earth returns her mist, the mist floats in the rain; all is swamped: looking round us, we see no reason why it should ever end. Here, truly, is Homer’s Cimmerian land: our feet splash, we have no use left for our eyes; we feel all our organs stopped up, becoming rusty by the mounting damp; we think ourselves banished from the breathing world, reduced to the condition of marshy beings dwelling in dirty pools: to live here is not life. We ask ourselves if this vast town is not a cemetery, in which dabble busy and wretched ghosts. Amidst the deluge of moist soot, the muddy stream with its unwearying iron ships, like black insects which take on board and land shades, makes us think of the Styx. As there is no light, they create it. Lately, in a large
square in London, in the finest hotel, it was necessary to leave the gas alight for five days running. We become melancholy; we are disgusted with others and with ourselves. What can people do in this sepulchre? To remain at home without working is to gnaw one’s vitals, and to prepare one’s self for suicide. To go out is to make an effort, to care neither for damp nor cold, to brave discomfort and unpleasant sensations. Such a climate prescribes action, forbids sloth, develops energy, teaches patience. I was looking just now on the steam-boat at the sailors at the helm,—their tarpanlins, their great streaming boots, their sou’-westers, so attentive, so precise in their movements, so grave, so self-contained. I have since seen workmen at their looms,—calm, serious, silent, economising their efforts, and persevering all day, all the year, all their life, in the same regular and monotonous struggle of mind and body: their soul is suited to their climate. Indeed it must be so in order to live: after a week, we feel that here a man must renounce refined and heartfelt enjoyment, the happiness of careless life, complete idleness, the easy and harmonious expansion of artistic and animal nature; that here he must marry, bring up a house-full of children, assume the cares and importance of a family man, grow rich, provide against an evil day, surround himself with comfort, become a Protestant, a manufacturer, a politician; in short, capable of activity and resistance; and in all the ways open to men, endure and strive.

Yet there are charming and touching beauties here—those, to wit, of a well-watered land. When, on a partly clear day, we take a drive into the country and reach an eminence, our eyes experience a unique sensation, and a pleasure hitherto unknown. In the
far distance, wherever we look on the horizon, in the fields, on the hills, spreads the always visible verdure, plants for fodder and food, clover, hops; lovely meadows overflowing with high thick grass; here and there a cluster of lofty trees; pasture lands hemmed in with hedges, in which the heavy cows ruminate in peace. The mist rises insensibly between the trees, and in the distance float luminous vapours. There is nothing sweeter in the world, nor more delicate, than these tints; we might pause for hours together gazing on these pearly clouds, this fine aerial down, this soft transparent gauze which imprisons the rays of the sun, dulls them, and lets them reach the ground only to smile on it and to caress it. On both sides of our carriage pass before our eyes incessantly meadows each more lovely than the last, in which buttercups, meadow-sweet, Easter-daisies, are crowded in succession with their dissolving hues; a sweetness almost painful, a strange charm, breathes from this inexhaustible and transient vegetation. It is too fresh, it cannot last; nothing here is staid, stable and firm, as in the South; all is fleeting, springing up, or dying away, hovering betwixt tears and joy. The rolling water-drops shine on the leaves like pearls; the round tree-tops, the widespread foliage, whisper in the feeble breeze, and the sound of the falling tears left by the last shower never ceases. How well these plants thrive in the glades, spread out wantonly, ever renewed and watered by the moist air! How the sap mounts in these plants, refreshed and protected against the weather! And how sky and land seem made to guard their tissue and refresh their hues! At the least glimpse of sun they smile with delicious charm; we would call them
delicate and timid virgins under a veil about to be raised. Let the sun for an instant emerge, and we will see them grow resplendent as in a ball dress. The light falls in dazzling sheets; the lustrous golden petals shine with a too vivid colour; the most splendid embroideries, velvet starred with diamonds, sparkling silk seamed with pearls, are not to be compared to this deep hue; joy overflows like a brimming cup. In the strangeness and the rarity of this spectacle, we understand for the first time the life of a humid land. The water multiplies and softens the living tissues; plants increase, and have no substance: nourishment abounds, and has no savour; moisture fructifies, but the sun does not fertilise. Much grass, much cattle, much meat; large quantities of coarse food: thus an absorbing and phlegmatic temperament is supported; the human growth, like the animal and vegetable, is powerful, but heavy; man is amply but coarsely framed; the machine is solid, but it turns slowly on its hinges, and the hinges generally creak and are rusty. When we look at the people closer, it seems that their various parts are independent, at least that they need time to let sensations pass through them. Their ideas do not at first break out in passions, gestures, actions. As in the Fleming and the German, they dwell first of all in the brain; they expand there, they rest there; man is not shaken by them, he has no difficulty in remaining motionless, he is not rapt: he can act wisely, uniformly; for his inner motive power is an idea or a watchword, not an emotion or an attraction. He can bear tedious, or rather he does not weary himself; his ordinary course consists of dull sensations, and the insipid monotony of mechanical life has nothing which need repel him. He is accustomed
to it, his nature is suited for it. When a man has all his life eaten turnips, he does not wish for oranges. He will readily resign himself to hear fifteen consecutive discourses on the same subject, demanding for twenty years the same reform, compiling statistics, studying moral treatises, keeping Sunday schools, bringing up a dozen children. The piquant, the agreeable, are not a necessity to him. The weakness of his sensitive impulses contributes to the force of his moral impulses. His temperament makes him argumentative; he can get on without policemen; the shocks of man against man do not here end in explosions. He can discuss in the market-place aloud, religion and politics, hold meetings, form associations, rudely attack men in office, say that the Constitution is violated, predict the ruin of the State: there is no objection to this; his nerves are calm; he will argue without cutting throats; he will not raise revolusions; and perhaps he will obtain a reform. Observe the passers-by in the streets; in three hours we will see all the visible features of this temperament: light hair, in children almost white; pale eyes, often blue as Wedgwood-ware, red whiskers, a tall figure, the motions of an automaton; and with these other still more striking features, those which strong food and combative life have added to this temperament. Here the enormous guardsman, with rosy complexion, majestic, slightly bent, who struts along twirling a little cane in his hand, displaying his chest, and showing a clear parting between his pomaded hair; there the over-fed stout man, short, sanguine, like an animal fit for the shambles, with his startled, dazed, yet sluggish air; a little further on the country gentleman, six feet high, stout and tall, like the German who left his forest.
with the muzzle and nose of a bull-dog, tremendous savage-looking whiskers, rolling eyes, apoplectic face; these are the excesses of coarse blood and food; add to which, even in the women, the white front teeth of a carnivorous animal, and big feet solidly shod, excellent for walking in the mud. Again, look at the young men in a cricket match or picnic party; doubtless mind does not sparkle in their eyes, but life abounds there; there is something of decision and energy in their whole being; healthy and active, ready for motion, for enterprise, these are the words which rise involuntarily to our lips when we speak of them. Many look like fine, slender harriers, sniffing the air, and in full cry. A life passed in gymnastic exercises or in venturesome deeds is honoured in England; they must move their body, swim, throw the ball, run in the damp meadow, row, breathe in their boats the briny sea-vapour, feel on their foreheads the raindrops falling from the large oak trees, leap their horses over ditches and gates; the animal instincts are intact. They still relish natural pleasures; precocity has not spoiled them. Nothing can be simpler than the young English girls; amidst many beautiful things, there are few so beautiful in the world; slim, strong, self-assured, so fundamentally honest and loyal, so free from coquetry! A man cannot imagine, if he has not seen it, this freshness and innocence; many of them are flowers, expanded flowers; only a morning rose, with its transient and delicious colour, with its petals drenched in dew, can give us an idea of it; it leaves far behind the beauty of the South, and its precise, stable, finished contours, its well-defined outlines; here we perceive fragility, delicacy, the continual budding of life; candid
eyes, blue as periwinkles, looking at us without thinking of our look. At the least stirring of the soul, the blood rushes in purple waves into these girls’ cheeks, neck, and shoulders; we see emotions pass over these transparent complexions, as the colours change in the meadows; and their modesty is so virginal and sincere, that we are tempted to lower our eyes from respect. And yet, natural and frank as they are, they are not languishing or dreamy; they love and endure exercise like their brothers; with flowing locks, at six years they ride on horseback and take long walks. Active life in this country strengthens the phlegmatic temperament, and the heart is kept more simple whilst the body grows healthier. Another observation: far above all these figures one type stands out, the most truly English, the most striking to a foreigner. Post yourself for an hour, early in the morning, at the terminus of a railway, and observe the men above thirty who come to London on business: the features are drawn, the faces pale, the eyes steady, preoccupied; the mouth open and, as it were, contracted; the man is tired, worn out, and hardened by too much work; he runs without looking round him. His whole existence is directed to a single end; he must incessantly exert himself to the utmost, practise the same exertion, a profitable one; he has become a machine. This is especially visible in workmen; perseverance, obstinacy, resignation, are depicted on their long bony and dull faces. It is still more visible in women of the lower orders: many are thin, consumptive, their eyes hollow, their nose sharp, their skin streaked with red patches; they have suffered too much, have had too many children, have a washed-out, or oppressed, or submissive, or stoically impassive air;
we feel that they have endured much, and can endure still more. Even in the middle or upper class this patience and sad hardening are frequent; we think when we see them of those poor beasts of burden, deformed by the harness, which remain motionless under the falling rain without thinking of shelter. Verily the battle of life is harsher and more obstinate here than elsewhere; whoever gives way, falls. Beneath the rigour of climate and competition, amidst the strikes of industry, the weak, the improvident, perish or are degraded; then comes gin and does its work; thence the long files of wretched women who sell themselves by night in the Strand to pay their rent; thence those shameful quarters of London, Liverpool, all the great towns, those spectres in tatters, gloomy or drunk, who crowd the dram-shops, who fill the streets with their dirty linen, and their rags hung out on ropes, who lie on a soot-heap, amidst troops of wan children; horrible shoals, whither descend all whom their wounded, idle, or feeble arms could not keep on the surface of the great stream. The chances of life are tragic here, and the punishment of improvidence cruel. We soon understand why, under this obligation to fight and grow hard, fine sensations disappear; why taste is blunted, how man becomes ungraceful and stiff; how discords, exaggerations, mar the costume and the fashion; why movements and forms become finally energetic and discordant, like the motions of a machine. If the man is German by race, temperament, and mind, he has been compelled in process of time to fortify, alter, altogether turn aside his original nature; he is no longer a primitive animal, but a well-trained animal; his body and mind have been transformed by strong
food, by bodily exercise, by austere religion, by public morality, by political strife, by perpetuity of effort; he has become of all men the most capable of acting usefully and powerfully in all directions, the most productive and effectual labourer, as his ox has become the best animal for food, his sheep the best for wool, his horse the best for racing.

II.

Indeed, there is no greater spectacle than his work; in no age or amongst no nation on the earth, I believe, has matter ever been better handled and utilised. If we enter London by water, we see an accumulation of toil and work which has no equal on this planet. Paris, by comparison, is but an elegant city of pleasure; the Seine, with its quays, a pretty serviceable plaything. Here all is vast. I have seen Marseilles, Bordeaux, Amsterdam, but I had no idea of such a mass. From Greenwich to London the two shores are a continuous wharf: merchandise is always being piled up, sacks hoisted, ships moored; ever new warehouses for copper, beer, ropework, tar, chemicals. Docks, timber-yards, calking-basins, and shipbuilders’ yards, multiply and encroach on each other. On the left there is the iron framework of a church being finished, to be sent to India. The Thames is a mile broad, and is but a populous street of vessels, a winding workyard. Steamboats, sailing vessels, ascend and descend, come to anchor in groups of two, three, ten, then in long files, then in dense rows; there are five or six thousand of them at anchor. On the right, the docks, like so many intricate, maritime streets, discharge or store up the vessels. If we get on a height,
we see vessels in the distance by hundreds and thousands, fixed as if on the land; their masts in a line, their slender rigging, make a spider-web which girdles the horizon. Yet on the river itself, towards the west, we see an inextricable forest of masts, yards, and cables; the ships are unloading, fastened to one another, mingled with chimneys, amongst the pulleys of the storehouses, cranes, capstans, and all the implements of the vast and ceaseless toil. A foggy smoke, penetrated by the sun, wraps them in its russet veil; it is the heavy and smoky air of a big hot-house; soil and man, light and air, all is transformed by work. If we enter one of these docks, the impression will be yet more overwhelming: each resembles a town; always ships, still more ships, in a line, showing their heads; their wide sides, their copper chests, like monstrous fishes under their breastplate of scales. When we are on the ground, we see that this breastplate is fifty feet high; many ships are of three thousand or four thousand tons. Clippers three hundred feet long are on the point of sailing for Australia, Ceylon, America. A bridge is raised by machinery; it weighs a hundred tons, and only one man is needed to raise it. Here are the wine stores—there are thirty thousands tuns of port in the cellars; here the place for hides, here for tallow, here for ice. The store for groceries extends as far as the eye can see, colossal, sombre as a picture by Rembrandt, filled with enormous vats, and crowded with many men, who move about in the flickering shade. The universe tends to this centre. Like a heart, to which blood flows, and from which it pours, money, goods, business arrive hither from the four quarters of the globe, and flow thence to the distant poles. And this circulation seems natural, so well is
it conducted. The cranes turn noiselessly; the tuns seem to move of themselves; a little car rolls them at once, and without effort; the bales descend by their own weight on the inclined planes, which lead them to their place. Clerks, without flurry, call out the numbers; men push or pull without confusion, calmly, husbanding their labour; whilst the stolid master, in his black hat, gravely, with spare gestures, and without one word, directs the whole.

Now let us take rail and go to Glasgow, Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester, to see their industry. As we advance into the coal country, the air is darkened with smoke; the chimneys, high as obelisks, are in hundreds, and cover the plain as far as we can see; many and various rows of lofty buildings, in red monotonous brick, pass before our eyes, like files of economical and busy beehives. The blast-furnaces flame through the smoke; I counted sixteen in one group. The refuse of minerals is heaped up like mountains; the engines run like black ants, with monotonous and violent motion, and suddenly we find ourselves swallowed up in a monstrous town. This manufactory has five thousand hands, one mill 300,000 spindles. The Manchester warehouses are Babylonian edifices of six storeys high, and wide in proportion. In Liverpool there are 5000 ships along the Mersey, which choke one another up; more wait to enter. The docks are six miles long, and the cotton warehouses on the side extend their vast red rampart out of sight. All things here seem built in unmeasured proportions, and as though by colossal arms. We enter a mill; nothing but iron pillars, as thick as tree-trunks, cylinders as big as a man; locomotive shafts like vast oaks, notching machines which
send up iron chips, rollers which bend sheet-iron like paste, fly-wheels which become invisible by the swiftness of their revolution. Eight workmen, commanded by a kind of peaceful colossus, pushed into and pulled from the fire a tree of red-hot iron as big as my body. Coal has produced all this. England produces twice as much coal as the rest of the world. It has also brick, on account of the great schists, which are close to the surface; it has also estuaries filled by the sea, so as to make natural ports. Liverpool and Manchester, and about ten towns of 40,000 to 100,000 souls, are springing up in the basin of Lancashire. If we glance over a geological map we see whole parts shaded with black; they represent the Scotch, the North of England, the Midland, the Welsh, the Irish coal districts. The old antediluvian forests, accumulating here their fuel, have stored up the power which moves matter, and the sea furnishes the true road by which matter can be transported. Man himself, mind and body, seems created to make the most of these advantages. His muscles are firm, and his mind can support tedium. He is less subject to weariness and disgust than other men. He works as well in the tenth hour as in the first. No one handles machines better; he has their regularity and precision. Two workmen in a cotton-mill do the work of three, or even four, French workmen. Let us look now in the statistics how many leagues of stuffs they manufacture every year, how many millions of tons they export and import, how many tens of millions they produce and consume; let us add the industrial or commercial states they have founded, or are founding, in America, China, India, Australia; and then perhaps, reckoning men and money-value,—considering that their capital is seven or eight
times greater than that of France, that their population has doubled in fifty years, that their colonies, wherever the climate is healthy, are becoming new Englands,—we will obtain some notion, very slight, very imperfect, of a work whose magnitude the eyes alone can measure.

There remains yet one of its parts to explore, the cultivation of the land. From the railway carriage we see quite enough to understand it: a field with a hedge, then another field with another hedge, and so on: at times vast squares of turnips; all this well laid out, clean, glossy; no forests, here and there only a cluster of trees. The country is a great kitchen-garden—a manufactory of grass and meat. Nothing is left to nature and chance; all is calculated, regulated, arranged to produce and to bring in profits. If we look at the peasants, we find no genuine peasants; nothing like French peasants,—a sort of fellahs, akin to the soil, mistrustful and uncultivated, separated by a gulf from the townsmen. The countryman here is like an artisan; and, in fact, a field is a manufactory, with a farmer for the foreman. Proprietors and farmers, lavish their capital like great contractors. They drain the land, and have a rotation of crops; they have produced cattle, the richest in returns of any in the world; they have introduced steam-engines into cultivation, and into the rearing of cattle; they perfect already perfect stables. The greatest of the aristocracy take a pride in it; many country gentlemen have no other occupation. Prince Albert, near Windsor, had a model farm, and this farm brought in money. A few years ago the papers announced that the Queen had discovered a cure for the turkey-disease. Under this uni-
versal effort, the products of agriculture have doubled in fifty years. In England, two and a half acres (hectare) receive eight or ten times more manure than the same number of French acres; though of inferior quality, the produce is double that of the French. Thirty persons are enough for this work, when in France forty would be required for half thereof. We come upon a farm, even a small one, say of a hundred acres; we find respectable, dignified, well-clad men, who express themselves clearly and sensibly; a large, wholesome, comfortable dwelling—often a little porch, with creepers—a well-kept garden, ornamental trees, the inner walls whitewashed yearly, the floors washed weekly,—an almost Dutch cleanliness; therewith plenty of books—travels, treatises on agriculture, a few volumes of religion or history; and above all, the great family Bible. Even in the poorest cottages we find a few objects of comfort and recreation; a large cast-iron stove, a carpet, nearly always paper on the walls, one or two moral tales, and always the Bible. The cottage is clean; the habits are orderly; the plates, with their blue pattern, regularly arranged, look well above the shining dresser; the red floor-tiles have been swept; there are no broken or dirty panes; no doors off hinges, shutters unhung, stagnant pools, straggling dunghills, as amongst the French villagers; the little garden is kept free from weeds; frequently roses and honeysuckle round the door; and on Sunday we can see the father and mother, seated by a well-scrubbed table, with tea, bread and butter, enjoying their home, and the order they have established there. In France the peasant on Sunday leaves his hut to visit his land: what he aspires to is possession;

1 Léonce de Lavergne. *Économie rurale en Angleterre*, passim.
what Englishmen love is comfort. There is no land in which they demand more in this respect. An Englishman said to me, not very long ago: "Our great vice is the strong desire we feel for all good and comfortable things. We have too many wants, we spend too much. As soon as our peasants have a little money, they buy the best sherry and the best clothes they can get, instead of buying a bit of land."¹

As we rise to the upper classes, this taste becomes stronger. In the middle ranks a man burdens himself with toil, to give his wife gaudy dresses, and to fill his house with the hundred thousand baubles of quasi-luxury. Higher still, the inventions of comfort are so multiplied that people are bored by them; there are too many newspapers and reviews on the table; too many kinds of carpets, washstands, matches, towels in the dressing-room; their refinement is endless; in thrusting our feet into slippers, we might imagine that twenty generations of inventors were required to bring sole and lining to this degree of perfection. We cannot conceive clubs better furnished with necessaries and superfluities, houses so well arranged and managed, pleasure and abundance so cleverly understood, servants so reliable, respectful, handy. Servants in the last census were "the most numerous class of Her Majesty's subjects;" in England there are five where in France they have two. When I saw in Hyde Park the rich young ladies, the gentlemen riding or driving,

¹ De Foe was of the same opinion, and pretended that economy was not an English virtue, and that an Englishman can hardly live with twenty shillings a week, while a Dutchman with the same money becomes wealthy, and leaves his children very well off. An English labourer lives poor and wretchedly with nine shillings a week, whilst a Dutchman lives very comfortably with the same wages.
when I thought of their country houses, their dress, their parks and stables, I said to myself that verily this people is constituted after the heart of economists: I mean, that it is the greatest producer and the greatest consumer in the world; that none is more apt at squeezing out and absorbing the quintessence of things; that it has developed its wants at the same time as its resources; and we involuntarily think of those insects which, after their metamorphosis, are suddenly provided with teeth, feelers, unwearying claws, admirable and terrible instruments, fitted to dig, saw, build, do everything, but furnished also with incessant hunger and four stomachs.

III.

How is this ant-hill governed? As the train moves on, we perceive, amidst farms and tilled lands, the long wall of a park, the frontage of a castle, more generally of some vast ornate mansion, a sort of country town-house, of inferior architecture, Gothic or Italian pretensions, but surrounded by beautiful lawns, large trees scrupulously preserved. Here lives the rich bourgeois; I am wrong, the word is false—I must say gentleman: bourgeois is a French word, and signifies the lazy parvenu, who devote themselves to rest, and take no part in public life; here it is quite different; the hundred or hundred and twenty thousand families, who spend a thousand and more annually, really govern the country. And this is no government imported, implanted artificially and from without; it is a spontaneous and natural government. As soon as men wish to act together, they need leaders; every association, voluntary or not, has one; whatever it be, state, army, ship, or parish, it cannot do without a guide to
find the road, to take the lead, call the rest, scold the laggards. In vain we call ourselves independent; as soon as we march in a body, we need a leader; we look right and left expecting him to show himself. The great thing is to pick him out, to have the best, and not to follow another in his stead; it is a great advantage that there should be one, and that we should acknowledge him. These men, without popular election, or selection from government, find him ready made and recognised in the large landed proprietor, a man whose family has been long in the county, influential through his connections, dependents, tenantry, interested above all else by his great estates in the affairs of the neighbourhood, expert in directing these affairs which his family have managed for three generations, most fitted by education to give good advice, and by his influence to lead the common enterprise to a good result. Indeed, it is thus that things fall out; rich men leave London by hundreds every day to spend a day in the country; there is a meeting on the affairs of the county or of the church; they are magistrates, overseers, presidents of all kinds of societies, and this gratuitously. One has built a bridge at his own expense, another a chapel or a school; many establish public libraries, where books are lent out, with warmed and lighted rooms, in which the villagers in the evening can read the papers, play draughts, chess, and have tea at low charges,—in a word, simple amusements which may keep them from the publichouse and gin-shop. Many of them give lectures; their sisters or daughters teach in Sunday schools; in fact, they provide for the ignorant and poor, at their own expense, justice, administration, civilisation. I know a very rich man, who in his Sunday school
taught singing to little girls. Lord Palmerston offered his park for archery meetings; the Duke of Marlborough opens his daily to the public, "requesting," this is the word used, "the public not to destroy the grass." A firm and proud sentiment of duty, a genuine public spirit, a noble idea of what a gentleman owes to himself, gives them a moral superiority which sanctions their command; probably from the time of the old Greek cities, no education or condition has been seen in which the innate nobility of man has received a more wholesome or completer development. In short, they are magistrates and patrons from their birth, leaders of the great enterprises in which capital is risked, promoters of all charities, all improvements, all reforms, and with the honours of command they accept its burdens. For observe, in contrast with the aristocracies of other countries, they are well educated, liberal, and march in the van, not in the rear of public civilisation. They are not drawing-room exquisites, like the French marquises of the eighteenth century: an English lord visits his fisheries, studies the system of liquid manures, speaks to the purpose about cheese; and his son is often a better rower, walker, and boxer than the farmers. They are not malcontents, like the French nobility, behind their age, devoted to whist, and regretting the middle-ages. They have travelled through Europe, and often further; they know languages and literature; their daughters read Schiller, Manzoni, and Lamartine with ease. By means of reviews, newspapers, innumerable volumes of geography, statistics, and travels, they have the world at their finger-ends. They support and preside over scientific societies; if the free inquirers of Oxford, amidst conventional rigour, have been able to give their explanations of the Bible,
it is because they knew themselves to be backed by enlightened laymen of the highest rank. There is also no danger that this aristocracy should become a set; it renews itself; a great physician, a profound lawyer, an illustrious general, become ennobled and found families. When a manufacturer or merchant has gained a large fortune, he first thinks of acquiring an estate; after two or three generations his family has taken root and shares in the government of the country: in this way the best saplings of the great popular forest fill up the aristocratic nursery. Observe, finally, that an aristocracy in England is not an isolated fact. Everywhere there are leaders recognised, respected, followed with confidence and deference, who feel their responsibility, and carry the burden as well as the advantages of the dignity. Such an aristocracy exists in marriage, where the man incontestably rules, followed by his wife to the end of the world, faithfully waited for in the evenings, unshackled in his business, of which he does not speak. There is such in the family, when the father can disinherit his children, and keeps up with them, in the most petty circumstances of daily life, a degree of authority and dignity unknown in France: if in England a son, through ill-health, has been away for some time from his home, he dare not come into the country to see his father without first asking if he may come; a servant to whom I gave my card refused to take it, saying, "Oh! I dare not hand it in now. Master is dining." There is respect in all ranks, in the workshops as well as in the fields, in the army as in the family. Throughout there are inferiors and

1 In familiar language, the father is called in England the governor; in France le banquier.
superiors who feel themselves so; if the mechanism of established power were thrown out of gear, we should behold it reconstructed of itself; below the legal constitution is the social, and human action is forced into a solid mould prepared for it.

It is because this aristocratic network is strong that human action can be free; for local and natural government being rooted throughout, like ivy, by a hundred small, ever-growing fibres, sudden movements, violent as they are, are not capable of pulling it up altogether. In vain men speak, cry out, call meetings, hold processions, form leagues: they will not demolish the state; they have not to deal with a set of functionaries who have no real hold on the country, and who, like all external applications, can be replaced by another set: the thirty or forty gentlemen of a district, rich, influential, trusted, useful as they are, will become the leaders of the district. "As we see in the papers," says Montesquieu, speaking of England, "that they are playing the devil, we fancy that the people will revolt to-morrow." Not at all, it is their way of speaking; they only talk loudly and rudely. Two days after I arrived in London, I saw advertising men walking with a placard on their backs and their stomachs, bearing these words: "Great usurpation! Outrage of the Lords, in their vote on the budget, against the rights of the people." But then the placard added, "Fellow-countrymen, petition!" Things end thus; they argue freely, and if the reasoning is good it will spread. Another time in Hyde Park, orators were declaiming in the open air against the Lords, who were called rogues. The audience applauded or hissed, as it pleased them. "After all," said an Englishman to me, "this
is how we manage our business. With us, when a man has an idea, he writes it; a dozen men think it good, and all contribute money to publish it; this creates a little association, which grows, prints cheap pamphlets, gives lectures, then petitions, calls forth public opinion, and at last takes the matter into Parliament; Parliament refuses or delays it; yet the matter gains weight: the majority of the nation pushes, forces open the doors, and then you'll have a law passed.” It is open to every one to do this; workmen can league against their masters; in fact, their associations embrace all England; at Preston I believe there was once a strike which lasted more than six months. They will sometimes mob, but never revolt; they know political economy by this time, and understand that to do violence to capital is to suppress work. Their chief quality is coolness; here, as elsewhere, temperament has great influence. Anger, blood does not rise at once to their eyes, as in the southern nations; a long interval always separates idea from action, and wise arguments, repeated calculations, occupy the interval. If we go to a meeting, we see men of every condition, ladies who come for the thirtieth time to hear the same speech, full of figures, on education, cotton, wages. They do not seem to be wearied; they can bring argument against argument, be patient, protest gravely, recommence their protest; they are the same people who wait for the train on the platform, without getting crushed, and who play cricket for a couple of hours without raising their voices or quarrelling for an instant. Two coachmen, who run into one another, set themselves free without storming or scolding. Thus their political association endures; they can be free because they
have natural leaders and patient nerves. After all, the state is a machine like other machines; let us try to have good wheels, and take care not to break them; Englishmen have the double advantage of possessing very good ones, and of managing them coolly.

IV.

Such is our Englishman, with his laws and his administration. Now that he has private comfort and public security, what will he do, and how will he govern himself in this higher, nobler domain, to which man climbs in order to contemplate beauty and truth? At all events, the arts do not lead him there. That vast London is monumental; but, like the castle of a man who has become rich, everything there is well preserved and costly, but nothing more. Those lofty houses of massive stone, burdened with porches, short columns, Greek decorations, are generally gloomy; the poor columns of the monuments seem washed with ink. On Sunday, in foggy weather, we would think ourselves in a cemetery; the perfect readable names on the houses, in brass letters, are like sepulchral inscriptions. There is nothing beautiful: at most, the varnished middle-class houses, with their patch of green, are pleasant; we feel that they are well kept, commodious, capital for a business man who wants to amuse himself and unbend after a hard day’s work. But a finer and higher sentiment could relish nothing here. As to the statues, it is difficult not to laugh at them. We see the Duke of Wellington, with a cocked hat and iron plumes; Nelson, with a cable which serves him for a tail, planted on his column, and pierced by a lightning-
conductor, like a rat impaled on the end of a pole; or again, the half-dressed Waterloo Generals, crowned by Victory. The English, though flesh and bone, seem manufactured out of sheet-iron: how much stiffer will English statues look? They pride themselves on their painting; at least they study it with surprising minuteness, in the Chinese fashion; they can paint a truss of hay so exactly, that a botanist will tell the species of every stalk; one artist lived three months under canvas on a heath, so that he might thoroughly know heath. Many are excellent observers, especially of moral expression, and succeed very well in showing the soul in the face; we are instructed by looking at them; we go through a course of psychology with them; they can illustrate a novel; we are touched by the poetic and dreamy meaning of many of their landscapes. But in genuine painting, picturesque painting, they are revolting. I do not think there were ever laid upon canvas such crude colours, such stiff forms, stuffs so much like tin, such glaring contrasts. Fancy an opera with nothing but false notes in it. We may see landscapes painted blood-red, trees which split the canvas, turf which looks like a pot of overturned green, Christs looking as if they were baked and preserved in oil, expressive stags, sentimental dogs, undressed women, to whom we should like forthwith to offer a garment. In music, they import the Italian opera; it is an orangetreeo kept up at great cost in the midst of turnips. The arts require idle, delicate minds,—not stoics, especially not puritans,—easily shocked by dissonance, inclined to visible pleasure, employing their long periods of leisure, their free reveries, in harmoniously arranging, and with no other object but enjoyment, forms, colours
and sounds. I need not say that here the bent of mind is quite the opposite; and we see clearly enough why, amidst these combative politicians, these laborious toilers, these men of energetic action, art can but produce exotic or ill-shaped fruit.

Not so in science; but in science there are two divisions. It may be treated as a business, to glean and verify observations, to combine experiments, to arrange figures, to weigh probabilities, to discover facts, partial laws, to possess laboratories, libraries, societies charged with storing and increasing positive knowledge; in all this Englishmen excel. They have even a Lyell, a Darwin, an Owen, able to embrace and renew a science; in the construction of the vast edifice, the industrious masons, masters of the second rank, are not lacking; it is the great architects, the thinkers, the genuine speculative minds, who fail them; philosophy, especially metaphysics, is as little indigenous here as music and painting; they import it, and yet they leave the best part on the road. Carlyle was obliged to transform it into a mystical poetry, humorous and prophetic fancies; Hamilton touched upon it only to declare it chimerical; Stuart Mill and Buckle, only seized the most palpable part,—a heavy residuum, positivism. It is not in metaphysics that the English mind can find its vent. It is on other objects that the spirit of liberal inquiry—the sublime instincts of the mind, the craving for the universal and the infinite, the desire of ideal and perfect things—will fall back. Let us take the day on which the hush of business leaves a free field for disinterested aspirations. There is no more striking spectacle for a foreigner than Sunday in London. The streets are empty, and the churches full. An Act of
Parliament forbids any playing to-day, public or private; the public-houses are not allowed to harbour people during divine service. Moreover, all respectable people are at worship, the seats are full: it is not as in France, where there are none but servants, old women, a few sleepy people, of private means, and a sprinkling of elegant ladies; but in England we see men well dressed, or at least decently clad, and as many gentlemen as ladies in church. Religion does not remain out of the pale, and below the standard of public culture; the young, the learned, the best of the nation, all the upper and middle classes, continue attached to it. The clergyman, even in a village, is not a peasant's son, with not over much polish, just out of the seminary, shackled in a cloisteral education, separated from society by celibacy, half-buried in mediævalism. In England he is a man of the times, often a man of the world, often of good family, with the interests, habits, freedom of other men; keeping sometimes a carriage, several servants, having elegant manners, generally well informed, who has read and still reads. On all these grounds he is able to be in his neighbourhood the leader of ideas, as his neighbour the squire is the leader of business. If he does not walk in the same path as the free-thinkers, he is not more than a step or two behind them; a modern man, a Parisian, can talk with him on all lofty themes, and not perceive a gulf between his own mind and the clergyman's. Strictly speaking, he is a layman like ourselves; the only difference is, that he is a superintendent of morality. Even in his externals, except for occasional bands and the perpetual white tie, he is like us; at first sight, we would take him for a professor, a magistrate, or a notary; and his sermons
agree with his person. He does not anathematise the world; in this his doctrine is modern; he follows the broad path in which the Renaissance and the Reformation impelled religion. When Christianity arose, eighteen centuries ago, it was in the East, in the land of the Essenes and Therapeutists, amid universal dejection and despair, when the only deliverance seemed a renunciation of the world, an abandonment of civil life, destruction of the natural instincts, and a daily waiting for the kingdom of God. When it rose again, three centuries ago, it was in the West, amongst laborious and half-free peoples, amidst universal restoration and invention, when man, improving his condition, regained confidence in his worldly destiny, and widely expanded his faculties. No wonder if the new Protestantism differs from the ancient Christianity, if it enjoins action instead of preaching asceticism, if it authorises comforts in place of prescribing mortification, if it honours marriage, work, patriotism, inquiry, science, all natural affections and faculties, in place of praising celibacy, withdrawal from the world, scorn of the age, ecstasy, captivity of mind, and mutilation of the heart. By this infusion of the modern spirit, Christianity has received new blood, and Protestantism now constitutes, with science, the two motive organs, and, as it were, the double heart of European life. For, in accepting the rehabilitation of the world, it has not renounced the purification of man’s heart; on the contrary, it is towards this that it has directed its whole effort. It has cut off from religion all the portions which are not this very purification, and, by reducing it, has strengthened it. An institution, like a machine, and like a man, is the more powerful for being more special: a work is done better because it is done singly,
and because we concentrate ourselves upon it. By the suppression of legends and religious observances, human thought in its entirety has been concentrated on a single object—moral amelioration. It is of this men speak in the churches, gravely and coldly, with a succession of sensible and solid arguments; how a man ought to reflect on his duties, mark them one by one in his mind, make for himself principles, have a sort of inner code, freely accepted and firmly established, to which he may refer all his actions without bias or hesitation; how these principles may be rooted by practice; how unceasing examination, personal effort, the continual edification of himself by himself, ought slowly to confirm our resolution in uprightness. These are the questions which, with a multitude of examples, proofs, appeals to daily experience,¹ are brought forward in all the pulpits, to develop in man a voluntary reformation, a guard and empire over himself, the habit of self-restraint, and a kind of modern stoicism, almost as noble as the ancient. On all hands laymen help in this; and moral warning, given by literature as well as by theology, harmoniously unites society and the clergy. Hardly ever does a book paint a man in a disinterested manner: critics, philosophers, historians, novelists, poets even, give a lesson, maintain a theory, unmask or punish a vice, represent a temptation overcome, relate the history of a character being formed. Their exact and minute description of sentiments ends always in approbation or blame; they are not artists, but moralists: it is only in a Protestant country that we will find a novel entirely occupied in describing the progress

¹ Let the reader, amongst many others, peruse the sermons of Dr. Arnold, delivered in the School Chapel at Rugby.
of moral sentiment in a child of twelve.\(^1\) All co-operate in this direction in religion, and even in the mystic part of it. Byzantine distinctions and subtleties have been allowed to fall away; Germanic inquisitiveness and speculations have not been introduced; the God of conscience reigns alone; feminine sweetness has been cut off; we do not find the husband of souls, the lovable consoler, whom the author of the *Imitation of Christ* follows even in his tender dreams; something manly breathes from religion in England; we find that the Old Testament, the severe Hebrew Psalms, have left their imprint here. It is no longer an intimate friend to whom a man confides his petty desires, his small troubles, a sort of affectionate and quite human priestly guide; it is no longer a king whose relations and courtiers he tries to gain over, and from whom he looks for favour or place; we see in him only a guardian of duty, and we speak to him of nothing else. What we ask of him is the strength to be virtuous, the inner renewal by which we become capable of always doing good; and such a prayer is in itself a sufficient lever to tear a man from his weaknesses. What we know of the Deity is that he is perfectly righteous; and such a reliance suffices to represent all the events of life as an approach to the reign of righteousness. Strictly speaking, righteousness alone exists; the world is a figure which conceals it, but heart and conscience sustain it, and there is nothing important or true in man but the embrace by which he holds it. So speak the old grave prayers, the severe hymns which are sung

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\(^1\) *The Wide Wide World*, by Elizabeth Wetherell (an American book). See also the novels of Miss Yonge, and chiefly those of George Eliot.
in the church, accompanied by the organ. Though a Frenchman, and brought up in a different religion, I listened to them with a sincere admiration and emotion. Serious and grand poems, which, opening a path to the Infinite, let in a ray of light into the limitless darkness, and satisfy the deep poetic instincts, the vague desire of sublimity and melancholy, which this race has manifested from its origin, and which it has preserved to the end.

V.

As the basis of the present as well as of the past ever reappears an inner and persistent cause, the character of the race; transmission and climate have maintained it; a violent perturbation—the Norman Conquest—warped it; finally, after various oscillations, it was manifested by the conception of a special ideal, which gradually fashioned or produced religion, literature, institutions. Thus fixed and expressed, it was henceforth the mover of the rest; it explains the present, on it depends the future; its force and direction will produce the present and future civilisation. Now that great historic vio-
lences—I mean the destructions and enslavements of peoples—have become almost impracticable, each nation can develop its life according to its own conception of life; the chances of a war, a discovery, have no hold but on details; national inclinations and aptitudes alone now show the great features of a national history; when twenty-five millions of men conceive the good and useful after a certain type, they will seek and end by attain-
ing this kind of the good and useful. The Englishman has henceforth his priest, his gentleman, his manufac-
ture, his comfort, and his novel. If we wish to know
in what sense this work will alter, we must enquire in what sense the central conception will change. A vast revolution has taken place during the last three centuries in human intelligence,—like those regular and vast uprisings which, displacing a continent, displace all the prospects. We know that positive discoveries go on increasing day by day, that they will increase daily more and more, that from object to object they reach the most lofty, that they begin by renewing the science of man, that their useful application and their philosophical consequences are ceaselessly unfolded; in short, that their universal encroachment will at last comprise the whole human mind. From this body of invading truths springs in addition an original conception of the good and the useful, and, moreover, a new idea of church and state, art and industry, philosophy and religion. This has its power, as the old idea had; it is scientific, if the other was national; it is supported on proved facts, if the other was upon established things. Already their opposition is being manifested; already their labours begin; and we may affirm beforehand, that the proximate condition of English civilisation will depend upon their divergence or their agreement.