

## REVIEWS.

*Social Evolution.* By BENJAMIN KIDD. New York, Macmillan & Co., 1894. — vi, 348 pp.

Once in many years a book appears which backs up a new interpretation of some great question in science or philosophy with an array of fact and reason so impregnable that adverse criticism is but an imbecile waste of words, and the currents of human thought are turned in new directions for all time to come. Mr. Darwin's *Origin of Species* was preëminently such a book. More frequently a work is published which, for the moment, seems to belong in the "epoch-making" rank, because the theory advanced is new or even startling, and is to all appearance well demonstrated; but further investigation bores so many holes in the premises that the superstructure is imperiled or overthrown. Nevertheless, the brilliant or daring hypothesis has powerfully stimulated research, and the book will therefore always occupy a prominent place in the history of thought. The best informed biologists seem now to be pretty well agreed that Weismann's *Germ Plasm* is a book of this description. Finally, there is the occasional book that advances bold hypotheses and defends them with such intellectual vigor and with such an original use of familiar knowledge that every reader finds himself compelled to think out the problems presented and to formulate his own beliefs, though he is conscious all the time that the author's positions are false or imperfect, and that his conclusions are erroneous or exaggerated. Such a book, in spite of its shortcomings, may produce an effect upon popular thinking hardly less than revolutionary. It must be acknowledged to be a remarkable book, if not in the truest sense of the word a great one. This type was perfectly realized in Mr. George's *Progress and Poverty*. It is now exemplified again in Mr. Kidd's *Social Evolution*.

The comparison to *Progress and Poverty* is not unfair to either author. Both Mr. George and Mr. Kidd exhibit the same love of the paradoxical. Both are masters of a novel, forcible, plausible way of putting things. Each of these authors deduces all social ills from a single cause and all social philosophy from a single principle. Each sees a sure means to universal happiness in a single extinction:

Mr. George in the extinction of private property in land values; Mr. Kidd in the extinction of reason. Mr. George has the courage of his convictions and proposes a single tax on rent. Mr. Kidd, were he a little bolder and somewhat more self-consistent, would urge a single tax on ratiocination. Mr. George's book created a movement and an ism among amateur economists who wanted to be ethical. Will not Mr. Kidd's book create a movement and an ism among sentimentalists who want to be sociological?

Mr. Kidd bases his argument on the premise that progress depends on continual strain and stress, consequent upon the birth of more individuals than can get a living, and resulting in the survival of the fittest after the weak have perished. This Darwinian truth he sets forth in its extreme form of Weismannism, which he accepts, apparently, as the final word of biological philosophy.

The argument then built on this foundation is briefly as follows :

Progress benefits the survivors, the fittest. There is nothing in it for the unfit, who must perish. But taking the generations of life in a grand aggregate, the exterminated have been, and the unfit that must perish will be, the vast majority. The benefits of progress, therefore, are for the few, and especially for the fittest that are yet unborn. They are for the race, not for the individual. Paradox now enters. The most unique product of progress is the human reason. Human reason is individual and individualistic. It teaches each man to ask what he is here for and what, being here, he can get out of life. In answer it says to a majority of individuals:

You are here as links in a chain. You are here to increase the stress and strain which will make a few of your fellow-beings strong and wise. You are here to suffer and die that the fittest, who survive, may enjoy the benefits of progress. There is nothing — there cannot possibly be anything in progress, for you. If you would consult your own well-being, you must put an end to progress. You must not have so many children. Limiting population, you must put an end to competition. Progress will cease, degeneration will set in, the race will suffer, but you will be comfortable.

The majority, to whom reason would say these things, could, if they would, follow a rational course, and bring progress to an end. If they do not do so, they are acting from other than rational motives. Progress, therefore, has no rational sanction. It must be accounted for by ultra-rational or supernatural sanctions.

Here endeth the first lesson. The second lesson is not less startling and is a good deal more novel. Science has accounted for many things, but it has until now failed to account for the most conspicuous

phenomenon in human society, namely, the universality of the religious sentiment and the vitality of organized religions. As a true evolutionist, Mr. Kidd inquires what social function religion performs — for to discover the social function is to find the explanation desired; and, prepared by the foregoing argument, he perceives it at once. Religion has always warned the individual not to trust his reason. The conflict between religion and science has been no mere philosophical contest; it has been the warfare of gigantic social forces. By suppressing reason religion has allowed progress to go on. Without religion there could have been no progress after reason was born. Religion, then, is the chief social power. It is the super-rational sanction of progress. Progress is not primarily intellectual; it is essentially religious. Yet reason, which would put an end to progress, is the child of progress and glories in it; while religion, which maintains progress, is conservative and suspicious of change. Thus each, like the apostle, does what it would not, and that which it would do it cannot.

Such is the argument. Mr. Kidd elaborates it in an account of Western civilization and a criticism of modern socialism. Western civilization is a marvelous development of intellect, but intellect did not create it. Christianity, by holding reason long in check, enabled competitive forces to gain great headway. Then, when intellect awakened, the vast fund of altruism that Christianity had accumulated began to emancipate classes that had not before taken an active part in the social struggle, and to extend to them all the benefits of knowledge. The result has been an enormous widening of the competitive area, a vast increase of strain and an acceleration of progress. Socialism is the reaction. It is a deliberate attempt to follow reason and to suppress competition. It will fail because altruism, combined with a conviction on the part of the capitalistic classes that the socialistic masses are, from their own point of view, in the right, will lead the wealthy to extend such opportunities to the poor that competition will continue to increase.

In a brief review, criticism of this most ingenious sociological theory may wisely be confined to four points. Mr. Kidd has rendered a real service to social science by his demonstration that altruism cannot interfere with natural selection. There has been too much absurd fear that philanthropy would help the unfit to survive at the expense of the fit. Some forms of misdirected philanthropy do undoubtedly have that result; but the philanthropy that broadens opportunity, and especially that which extends education,

must inevitably, as Mr. Kidd contends, intensify competition and increase the stress of life, thereby hastening the selective process.

But precisely the same thing is true of intellectual progress, and Mr. Kidd's argument that modern progress is not primarily intellectual is exaggerated and largely fallacious. Scientific discovery and invention have enabled population to increase, migrate, cross and sift to an extent almost beyond the power of imagination to grasp. As Dr. Longstaff says, the multiplication of population in the last one hundred years has been a phenomenon absolutely unique in history. In addition, discovery and invention, by revealing possibilities of life before undreamed of, have created new wants and aspirations that have stimulated activity to the highest pitch. If progress is due chiefly to stress and selection, then, beyond any question, intellect, operating through discovery and invention, has been a greater factor than any other in modern progress.

On the other hand, Mr. Kidd is entitled to credit for compelling us to recognize a part that non-rational sanctions have played in progress. He falls into serious confusion, however, in identifying all non-rational with supernatural and anti-rational sanctions. There are mysteries in life that reason is powerless to explain. It is a fact that, to some individuals, progress brings only misery and sorrow, and that thousands of such individuals have been sustained by faith in conduct that was beneficial to society and to the race. But faith has thus aided progress only by supplementing reason where reason stops, never by impairing confidence in the trustworthiness of reason within its own sphere. If reason can carry its explanation of life to certain limits, but not beyond, two things follow. First, reason cannot say to the individual that, if he suffers through progress, he ought in reason to discountenance progress. Unless it professes to explain life absolutely and to the uttermost, reason cannot possibly give to the discontented man the advice that Mr. Kidd represents it as giving. At the utmost, assuming that he is a pure egoist, it can only tell him that, under such circumstances, he can give no reason why he should not discountenance progress. Secondly, in this dilemma the individual may fall back on faith, and assume that relations which he cannot understand are nevertheless to be accepted as right. To this extent faith has been, and will continue to be, a powerful sanction of progress.

It could never have been such, however, if a majority of individuals in each generation had suffered more than they had benefited by progress. In such a case faith would have broken down. This

brings us to the minor premise of Mr. Kidd's argument, and it turns out to be absolutely false. His major premise, as was observed, is the assumption that stress of life is the original cause of progress. The false minor premise is, that at any given time the victims of progress who know that they are victims and want to put an end to progress are numerous enough to put the wish into effect, if unrestrained by supernatural or at least ultra-rational sanctions. Nothing could be more untrue to fact. Suppose that of one hundred families now living, all but ten will have become extinct in the tenth generation. That would be natural selection at a great pace, yet, at that rate, but ten families will drop out in each generation; and if we suppose that only ten new families appear in each generation, there will still be, at all times, ninety families able to hold their own, to ten that are expiring. In most cases the families destined to extinction cannot possibly know the fact two or three generations in advance. At any given time, therefore, a majority expect life; they are for the time being fairly well adjusted to the conditions of life, and have no complaint to make against progress. Yet all the while the inexorable process of natural selection goes on, and progress is assured. Five minutes' study of a life-insurance expectation table might have shown Mr. Kidd on what a foundation of sand he was building.

Altogether, then, Mr. Kidd's book is a curious mixture of truth and fallacy. But it is an interesting book, and stimulating. It will make a great many people do more serious thinking in sociology than they have ever done before.

FRANKLIN H. GIDDINGS.

*Socialism.* — An Examination of its Nature, its Strength and its Weakness, with Suggestions for Social Reform. By RICHARD T. ELY, Ph.D., LL.D. New York and Boston, Thomas Y. Crowell & Co., 1894. — 449 pp.

The appearance of Dr. Ely's readable book is singularly apt at this time. Students of social science and the actual promoters of the socialistic propaganda are perhaps the only persons in our country who understand scientific socialism at first-hand from the writings of its great leaders, Owen, Marx, Engels, Louis Blanc, Lassalle and others. A large majority of the American people know socialism only from the newspapers and from the speeches of labor agitators. It is much the same with the movement toward social reform in general. In all our great cities, small bodies of earnest men and women may indeed be found devoted to this or that practical reform; but for the most part they are absorbed in their own work