

Progress of Civilization.

The word civilization has been used to designate a community possessed of, and living in accordance with written laws. There may be as many grades of civilization as we may have degrees of excellence in the perfection, and adaptation of codes of law to the needs of the human family, also in the degree of perfection with which the individual members of a community abide by or maintain their written code. It then follows that the proper understanding of, and deference to the rights of others is the basis of any civilization,

and it thus follows of necessity that all civilization must rest upon the education, and moral integrity of the people.

This is a subject that is now occupying the most profound thought of the best minds of this age, which it has doubtless done in the ages of the past. This brings us to the proposition that the attainments of a nation in general culture is an integral part of its civilization is that which gives it its essential character. No one branch of learning can be attained in its highest degree without ^{the} broadening, and deepening, effect of general culture.

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It therefore follows that the highest state of civilization must be coexistent with the greatest culture of the community. We should also especially mention in this connection that a few may be highly cultivated, to the exclusion of the masses, and thus give a false impression as to the attainments of a nation. Laws may be wise in many respects, but for the want of attainment by the masses will fail in their results—so that a critical examination will develop the fact of weakness, as proved to be the case with France at the outbreak of the late Franco-Russian war, France had

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much intelligence in her Capitol, but in her masses great ignorance prevailed, as compared with Prussia, and the nation proved correspondingly weak.

The general appreciation of the material facts of the Arts and Sciences both useful, and ornamental strengthen both the arm and the brain, it enables a people to make the necessary division of labor for the support of each other in their advancement, and this support brought about by labor in recognized directions by the individuals, while the nation as a whole carries forward all branches of industry by hand and brain is the essential element of Progress.

Now with this brief review of what we conceive to be the essential characteristics of a civilization of high order, we will try to trace some of the characteristic steps by which it has been attained. The oldest traces of man associate him with animals that have long since become extinct—so long ago indeed that the most ancient history gives no account of them—still we are enabled to glean something of their history from the remains of them left in the rocks, and with them some knowledge of the men who pursued, captured, and fed upon their flesh. Those who deny the development of

man, that is contend that in all ages the human family has existed essentially as now—civilized, and educated in some parts of the world, ignorant and debased in others—ever changing from ^{this} section to that, from this race to that, but on the whole never changing more than in the form of culture, must also deny all the essential facts of Geology, or bring forward the facts to show that civilized and educated races has existed in times geologically as remote as the traces of the rude men of which we speak.

This has, to say the least not yet been done, and until some such facts

are brought to light, we feel bound to accept the theory of the gradual improvement of the intellectual faculties of man. From these remains we learn some important lessons, among which is the fact that the very first gleams of thought, which we can trace are represented by pictures of some kind, images of animals traced on bones seem to be among the earliest efforts found, and seem to precede the thought of constructing a dwelling place, further than taking possession of some friendly cave, or sheltering rock.

With the construction of temporary huts is usually associated the art of

painting, in addition to the scratching of images on solid substances, and the religious feeling begins to assert itself in some definite forms, and when the stage of the construction of permanent dwellings is reached, the religious sentiment usually rises to the ruling element of the mind, in most instances people arriving at this stage of development seem to spend their entire energies, over and above what is required for the maintenance of an existence, in the gratification of the religious sentiment, and if the country be favorable there to, the art of sculpture or temple building springs forward with all the fervor to

which the human mind can be driven
 by religious frenzy. In these first
 stages of improvement stone seems in all
 ages to have been material sought, for
 the representations of the conception of
 the infinite and everlasting Gods - No mat-
 ter what the conception may have been,
 a stork, an ox, a lion with a mans head,
 a crockodile, the sun or the human form -
 the sculpturing of it in the everlasting
 rock, has been the glory of the religious
 enthusiast. If stone be not at hand some
 thing else will be made to serve in its
 stead. Clay will be baked in the conceived
 forms, and vases and water pots be fash-
 ioned to serve as representations of Deity.

As the community becomes strong in numbers, great temples must be built to satisfy the religious enthusiasm. If the country happen to abound in stone of a durable character, great structures dedicated to worship are inevitable, and wherever found are as certain monuments of this stage of civilization, as earth works and lines of defence are of scenes of strife in the present age.

There is an important fact connected with all primitive religious feeling, which renders these massive works possible, while it tends to the perpetuation of these forms of worship to the prevention of development in other directions.

We allude to the capture of the principal powers by the priesthood which is always found to take and hold the ruling power at this stage of development, no matter what the form of worship or religious belief. In all civilizations of the past and present are to be found monuments of this fact, which seem as inevitable as the monument of the planets. Even the religion of Christ was thus captured, and used successfully to rule Europe for a thousand years during which time very little advancement was made in art, but finally a mind was found which possessed the necessary strength to break through the seemingly

impenetrable gloom, and take a long step in the direction of liberty of thought and start thousands of minds forward in mental activity with a lighter load of prejudice, and religious ruling to hold them back, and to this circumstance the race is largely indebted for the progress of the present age.

The European has now nearly approached freedom from the rulings of Priestcraft than any other people, and until such control is entirely lost, and every man is fully recognized as his own, and only mediator with his God, can the traveling effect of religion on advance of thought be said to have lost its influence, and the mind

of man speed freely on to the greatest understanding of nature, and natures God that the human intellect is capable of, and yet the religious principle has not been entirely a retarding influence, but seems to be one of the necessities of development, it furnishes men with food for thought and speculation at a stage of development when some tangible occupation of the mind, asside from what other subjects would probably present to a people so arud in learning seems necessary, and serves as a bond of union among bodies of men of the strongest, and most lasting nature, and has thus served as the central point around which

the young civilization has found as the one sentiment common to all, and and in which all were interested, it has in very many instances given rise to thought in special directions, and in this way done much to advance learning.

One of the oldest civilizations is that of the Chinese, who have shown considerable cultivation, but unfortunately their literature is locked up in a system of hieroglyphics so extremely difficult to master, that no great amount of it has been translated, but the little that we are in possession of gives no great confidence

that much of value would be found. as a nation they seem to have ever been pretty closely under the control of the Priesthood, and never have risen above a very rigid national exclusiveness, two conditions utterly at variance with a high state of culture.

The Hindu people have probably been second to none on the earth as temple builders, from the ruins left we are led to conclude that this stage of civilization with them, was one of great strength, and occupied quite a large extent of country. Unfortunately for the student of ancient works, their country was

one unfavorable for the long continued protection of their buildings, and they are mostly destroyed, except some of the most recent which are of an inferior type. The nation seems to have never in any sense risen above the temple building stage of civilization, but this stage was brought to great perfection. They seem to have made but little advance in Art or Science except in the working of stone, and the construction and ornamentation of their great temples.

The greatest studies of the temple builders work is to be found in the valley of the Nile, the climate of

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which is peculiarly favorable to its protection. These remains speak plainly of a people controlled and ruled despotically by priest-craft, seemingly possessed of but one aim or thought, each and every piece of human stone either in its cutting or laying is made to speak of their Gods in some form or manner, and we in studying them are induced to enquire how they could have subsisted, so completely does their time seem to have been devoted to the gratification of the religious sentiment. They never advanced beyond this stage of civilization and it is not surprising

that in what scraps of their literature that have been found there is little to interest except as curiosities of a people long since passed away. In the way of curiosities, scraps and relics illustrative of the past events in the history of man, these ruins are of great interest and afford us much that sheds light upon the gloom of past history. but they afford nothing of practical value to the present civilization, their modes of thought, their science, if it can be so called and even their machines by which these immense structures were raised are now replaced by modes so much better that nothing of practical value is to be

obtained by their study.

Some of the peoples of the valley of the Euphrates seem, to a large extent at least, to have been worshipers of the heavenly bodies, here we find the same phenomena as in the other forms of religious worship, but it is in the directions of the study of the heavenly bodies, which was doubtless followed with the same religious fervor, with which the wonderful temple building was prosecuted, as a natural result we find that among these people Astronomy made great progress, and now we are surprised to find scraps of writing among their relics which show

so much progress in this subject, by a people who's literature shows no great advance in other directions.

We might also mention the more recent civilization of our own continent who's calendar was more perfect than that of the European at the same time we allude to the Aztecs of Mexico, and the Inkas of Peru, especially the former, these people were to a great extent worshippers of the sun, and the apparent motions of heavenly bodies in celestial space was studied with great religious fervor, with this people the European came in direct contact at a time of the writing of definite history,

so that we are enabled to know somewhat concisely of their attainments in other directions, and find here as elsewhere, but little advance except in the direction in which they were carried by their religious convictions.

In Asia Minor we find the shores of the Mediterranean strewn with the remains of magnificent temples, which had fallen into ruin long before the advent of written history, and which had evidently been erected by a people too little advanced to perpetuate their own memory in written language, but of whom the Greeks were probably descendants.

Among the Greeks we find an outgrowth under religious feeling quite different from those we have been discussing, it consists essentially in the deification of their ancient heroes, and the religious thought was embodied in the human form of the highest type, to which fact is due the wonderful sculptures of this people. In no other age has the sculpture attained such profusion or such perfection, this was the necessary result of their religious thought, and the previous training in the working of stone by their more purely temple building ancestors. Although not free from priest-craft the worship

of Slavery in the human form was ennobling and in their best days much liberty of thought was tolerated, and largely encouraged by the best men, and the result was a degree of cultivation unequalled by any previous or coexistent people. Attainments of a purely literary nature (aside from religious writings) became honored for the first time in the history of the world, and although the characteristic speculative reasoning was most indulged in, there were some remarkable developments in the exact sciences. It is evident however that the improvement in the Arts was mostly confined to sculpture and ornamentation.

The art of working precious metals in ornamental forms was here carried to great perfection. This art however seems to be very old and was evidently in a very high state of perfection before the siege of Troy. This early development of purely ornamental work, was a natural result of the great desire of rude people for show, and is we believe always one of the first elements in leading men to that division of labor into special branches, to be pursued by the individual, which is so necessary to progress.

In their husbandry although they may have introduced many improv-

ments, there is very little in this department that we can credit directly to them

In studying their history the student may notice that the greatest development in the art of sculpture was prior to, but overlapping to some extent their greatest days in literature, which is significant of the proper position of these attainments in the order of mental culture.

The history of development of mind shows these gradations of thought. The religious enthusiast inspires the Sculptor, the Sculptor with his wonderful imitators, gives rise to the higher

contemplations, and loosens the tongue of the poet, after these come speculative reasoning, which is slowly followed by the more pure form of thought which deals with known facts giving rise to Philosophy, and the Sciences.

Toward the close of the brilliant career of the Greeks the Roman empire was ripening into maturity, they had been sufficiently near the Greeks to catch something of their inspiration, and the essential characteristics of their civilization was quite similar, Oratory was honored, and literary distinction sufficiently favored by the people to call out strenuous efforts in this direction with corresponding

progression. One of the greatest improvements in human thought to which the world is indebted to Rome is the practical recognition by this people, that the whole race of man belong to one family, which though it may never have been spoken was practically exemplified in their conduct toward their conquered enemies, although they were often cruel in war, it was a part of their policy to make the conquered nations a part of themselves as far as possible, thus endeavoring to unite them into one common brother hood. This example though only partially successful, has had a

powerful and lasting effect, in dissipating national exclusiveness, facilitating international exchange of thought and leading to greater development, finally the reins of power at Rome were usurped by the priestcraft, this time of the Christian faith with the broad claim that it should rule the whole world and unite all the families of man into one common Brotherhood, with one Church and one state, while the temporal power was not successfully held directly by the Church of Rome, it rapidly assumed the spiritual control of the rulers and in this way controlled Europe for a long succession of years.

Although this power was often exercised

with the utmost degree of cruelty toward those of slight difference of faith, and the minds of the people kept under such religious servalence as to almost utterly prevent advance of thought, the great lesson taught of the unity of man became imperishable, and now constitutes one of the chief stones in the foundation of the advancement of recent times. The example of Rome may be said to have been the first determined effort to unite the inhabitants of a wide spread territory into one people with a common purpose and interests.

The extension of this power was largely by the sword, and was in this re-

spect barbarous. While done in the name of religion this seems to have been used quite as much, as a pretext for the extension of the power of the nations engaging in it as for the religions of Christ.

The Mahomedans also took the field in a similar, but more decided manner for the spread of their peculiar faith, and succeeded in uniting under one faith a wide spread territory.

But as with all the religions of the east they have never risen above subservience to the Priesthood, a condition utterly at variance with any long continued or high order of mental progress.

To progress steadily and to rise to a high order of civilization it is necessary that every individual member of a community should be recognized as absolutely free in thought. The greatest freedom of action consistent with the welfare of others is also ^anecessity.

When Martin Luther broke through the power of the priesthood an immense stride was made in the direction of liberty of thought and action. Conquests that were formerly made by the sword, we have learned to make by means of interchange of thought, education and conviction.

Instead of the thought and action

of the individual being directed by the ruling power, the thought and actions of the ruling power is becoming the reflection of the thought of the individuals of the community.

Nations become acquainted and the knowledge of the one is spread to all and a community of interest is being established throughout the whole world, which must lead to higher and nobler results in the future.

The stages of progress may be thus summarised 1st. Man is found to have been little more than a wild man of the woods, in which state he scratched rude devices on bones

or other solid substances showing evidence of thought

2nd. He builds temporary huts or shelters, adds the art of painting, and adopts some rude form of religion.

3^d. Builds permanant dwellings and the religious sentiment becomes the ruling element of the mind.

The conceived form of deity becomes the subject of sculpture.

4th. Large communities are gathered together with one form of worship under the rule of the priesthood, and sculptive temple building and ornamentation in the service of the deity, are the distinguishing features.

5th. The power of the priesthood gives way to individual freedom of thought. Rapid advance is made in general culture.