

TOPICS OF THE DAY

"I": NEED OF THINKING: A SOUNDING WATCHWORD: REVOLUTIONARY: LOOKING BACKWARD: REVISION NEEDED: OUR SCHOOLS: MANAGEMENT AND LABOUR.

FOR once, I must intrude with a capital "I". Since the management of *The Dalhousie Review* paid me the compliment of entrusting this section of the magazine to me, some five years ago, I have never written in the first person, singular or plural, or even in the third person, but always impersonally. I have depended on *Review* readers to take cognizance of this fact without its being specifically pointed out. My confidence has mostly been justified. My critics have seldom been severe, but not a few of them have remarked that they "cannot always agree" with me, or that I do not "usually admit" that "much may be said on both sides" of the "Topics" concerning which I express opinions. These, apparently, have not noticed my impersonality, or are not aware of its limitations, or of the limitations of my task for the *Review*.

The "Topics," according to my understanding, are intended to be mere one-sided comments on what others are talking or thinking about. Everybody surely knows, without being expressly told, that there are at least two sides to any problem under popular consideration. For me to set forth what others are saying or thinking on a given topic would, so far as I can see, serve no useful purpose. The public should be as well-informed regarding current views as I. What they need, I take it, is a clear-cut expression of opinion from one side, leaving the other perfectly free to hold and maintain its own opinions as it will. But little space can be devoted to each topic. It would be a mere waste of time for me to say, in each, "I think this, but some one else thinks that." What good would thus be accomplished, what useful end served? It would merely spare readers the valuable mental exercise of thinking for themselves. By stating my own opinions in the fewest possible words, I do exactly what I desire to do, which is to compel thought and stimulate discussion. I am very far from being cocksure in my own mind with regard to my opinion on any subject. I have not the least disposition to address the public *ex cathedra*, or in any superior, know-it-all manner. But while I write im-

personally, I have no alternative but to state the facts—I am always open to correction as to them—and express my opinions as well as I can in the very small allotted space. I cannot enlarge, as I might in a full-length contribution to the *Review*, on any one of my subjects, most of which are, in effect, forced upon me quarterly.

I must continue, therefore, to write impersonally, or not at all. I dislike the editorial “we,” and I am not really entitled to use it in the “Topics,” which are initialled and practically signed by me. I could not consent to write in the first person singular and encounter the risks of being charged with the egotism which the “I” tends to engender, and of which it is sure to arouse suspicions, whether justly or not. It would force me to hedge and dodge and multiply vain words. So I must go on writing as I have been doing in the past, sticking as carefully as possible to facts, and expressing my opinions in connection with them without specific apology or qualification. I do not expect all to agree with me at any time, or on any subject. On the contrary, I ordinarily expect most to disagree. I have not the least objection to their doing so. *Dulce et decorum est*, at times, to differ in opinion from the multitude. How much more pleasant and proper must it be for the multitude to differ from me on each or all of *The Dalhousie Review’s* Topics of the Day, if and when they feel so disposed.

THE paramount need of the world has been, is, and will be, right thought, always right thought, and again right thought. Our world has never been without a modicum of right thought since it began to think. Moreover, the world, collectively, has probably never known a period when those who were of the day did not wail either that the golden age of thought was in the past, or that their contemporaries were all thinking and therefore acting amiss. Yet the bard never sounded a truer note than when he sang,

Through the ages one increasing purpose runs,
And the thoughts of men are widen'd with the process of the suns.

Not only are they widened—they are deepened by increasing knowledge, obscured though it be for some by its alternative word, Science. If it were but generally known that “Science” is merely another way of spelling “accurate knowledge,” the attitude of the uninformed towards it might be materially modified. The word “modern” prefixed to science, greatly increases the popular prejudice

against its teachings. Science is widely regarded as a sort of survival of mediaeval Black Art, and its disciples as cunning magicians who mingle occasional elements of truth with their incantations, to make them more dangerous. For science to cast suspicion on the beautiful dream of a pristine Golden Age, with "perfect peoples, perfect kings," is deemed nothing short of sacrilege. But in spite of the gross ignorance of the many, and the prejudices of nearly all, right thinking goes on uninterruptedly and increasingly. It is confined now, as always, to a limited range of minds, but those minds are the light and the salt of the world. Not more than one or two great thinkers have appeared in any age. These have sufficed to lighten the darkness immediately around them. They have handed down their torches to succeeding Ages, whose succeeding great minds have retrimmed and added to them their own light, and so passed them on until, in our day, the world is illumined as never before.

Philosophy, the love of knowledge, apparently originated with the deep thinkers of the East, and slowly made its way westward to Egypt and thence to Greece. It was mainly a mental science, and reached its zenith before the Christian era. The Israelitish cosmogony, if not theosophy, almost certainly came from Babylon by way of the Nile. Plato was a precursor of Jesus, the moral and spiritual philosopher and Prophet of Nazareth. Had Plato been less a mental philosopher and more a prophet, he too might have been a great religious teacher and reformer.

An inherent tendency of ignorance is to misinterpret and becloud knowledge. The spiritual message of Jesus was misunderstood and obscured after His personality no longer remained to make it unmistakably plain. When the war and not peace which, as frankly stated by Him, it was His mission to bring, had rent and seemingly ruined the western world, the Dark Ages supervened. When there is no vision, the people perish. It was lack of vision, that is, of right thinking, which induced the moral darkness that dimmed mental light for centuries. With the rebirth or reappearance of thought, light burst forth anew in Europe, grew steadily in intensity, and diffused its beams over all the earth. The light of knowledge is inextinguishable. It may be veiled. It cannot be put out, while right thinkers are born and survive. Right thinkers are such as base their premises on the sure foundation of ascertained fact, and are not afraid to accept and maintain the logical conclusions to which they are thus compelled.

LET us be devoutly thankful, with Tennyson, for "the sounding watchword, Evolution, here." It expresses no new or strange thought-birth. It had place in the minds of primitive philosophers. Only their limitations in science prevented their development of the idea. Modern knowledge has compelled its final emergence. A century ago its proclamation, even as a theory, would have been premature. The knowledge for its justification was still lacking. Although it is truly a "sounding watchword," it embodies no revolutionary conception. It merely expresses the gradual *unrolling* of the illimitable scroll of the universe as written by a mighty, mysterious Hand. It recognizes God in His works, instead of as He was dimly conceived in primeval minds. This revelation would be beyond price, apart from the sources of physical knowledge to which it directly points. Men are so dependent on their conception of Deity for what they are, or may become, that the conveyance to them of measurably right ideas of the Supreme Being is of primary and vital importance.

The cosmogony, the theosophy and the morality of the pre-Christian world have alike been outlived. They have long had a maleficent rather than a beneficent influence on men, individually and socially. Jesus would have rid the world of them; but His early followers clung passionately to them as "the religion of our fathers," and succeeded in frustrating His designs. How difficult, how almost impossible it is to free one's mind from the thralldom of the inherited Jewish conception of a man-made and man-like Deity, is strikingly shown in a recent, semi-autobiographical book, entitled *The Conquest of Fear*, by Basil King, a distinguished Canadian born author and clergyman, now resident in the United States. Mr. King, with a sincerity obviously unquestionable, tells of his personal struggles to substitute in his own mind the God of the universe and of Christ for the archaic deity of Genesis and of outworn theology. He has scarcely succeeded in spite of his best efforts, for he still writes and evidently thinks of the natural beauty and sublimity around us as a manifestation of Him, whereas to scientific thought it is but the reflection of ourselves, that is of God in us. It suggests, beyond misunderstanding, that God is Life, not something apart from life. The apostle wrote "God is Love." What do we know of love, save through life? And what of beauty? What, indeed, is the universe apart from life? Could it be known? Would it be knowable, or even existent? Evolution verifies and proclaims Christ's teaching that all are in God, and God in all; that in Him we live, move and have our being. Who can find in such teaching aught contrary to religion?

BUT religion is not the chosen domain of Evolution. Evolution is concerned primarily with physical nature. It treats of the origin and development of life. Its bearing on spiritual and moral phenomena is only inferential, but its inference is of profound consequence. Man, as a part of universal design, is in a very different category from man as creature of a merely external Creator. That is the inference with regard to him which Evolution draws. It therefore affects him both morally and spiritually. It affects him in his own sight, and in all his relations with his environment. It constitutes him a joint heir of time and eternity. It gives him a radically altered spiritual outlook. It affords him a broadened and exalted view of his social connections. It impresses upon him the duty of obedience to laws within himself instead of to arbitrary, external commands. It makes him the born brother of his fellows, because of identical parentage with them, in body and spirit. It makes the whole world of life of immediate and close kin, and impresses the necessity for the closest co-operation among those endowed with higher intelligence, not only for the good of one another, but for the benefit of all lower in the sentient scale. Indirectly, therefore, the theory of Evolution has much, and of vast importance, to do with every aspect of knowledge and life. It cannot but profoundly affect both thought and action. Its ultimate effect, when fully understood and accepted, should be to revolutionize the whole world of humanity.

THE acceptance of Evolution by the individual should be accompanied by the specific perception that he, as its highest terrestrial product, should devote himself to its furtherance. He is specially endowed with that end in view. He alone has the gift of conscious reason and the power of thought. The more these gifts are exercised, the stronger will they grow, and the more potent will they become in their influence for good in accordance with the Supreme Will. In promoting his own continuing evolution the individual cannot but contribute to the advancement of his fellows. And while he lives in society, as his nature requires, his chief duty is to his associates. For them as well as for himself he must constantly look forward, while never losing sight of the practical teachings of the past. This is not the tendency which has so far prevailed; quite the opposite. Who can tell to what extent progress has been hindered by our stumbling forward, with eyes for ever turned backward to the fancied golden ages and god-like men of old?

This does not mean that it is not well to respect our forefathers for what they accomplished, and to adhere to the paths which they tried and proved, until more promising ways are indicated. It is not to decry justifiable conservatism or to advocate rash radicalism, but to recommend wise liberalism. These terms, of course, are used without political signification. We shall not make adequate progress if we continue to look backward for wisdom instead of for instructive experiences. Our fathers were neither wiser nor greater than we. They were simply like ourselves, but circumscribed in knowledge, and therefore in thought and outlook. No single generation in all the world's history has been as enlightened, and well-fitted for right thinking and wise procedure, as the present. Are we trying to follow in the onward footsteps of science, or are we lingering in the shadows of the past, clinging timorously to the skirts of the departed? Every wise son accepts the guidance of his parents until he reaches years of discretion. No wise son submits invariably to parental dictation thereafter. That must be a wonderful father, indeed, whom a son can afford to follow in all his ways, when he himself reaches mature life. What is true of individuals is true of the race. The dead past is best left to bury its dead. The light which it has for the present is mainly that of solemn warning. Hope should be the watchword of the future. Fear has had its day. Hope, like faith, is the evidence of things not seen, the substance of things desired, for the attainment of which we are willing to take pains.

WHEN the poet wrote,

Evolution ever climbing after some ideal good,
And Reversion ever dragging Evolution in the mud,

he had in mind not physical but moral things—things political and social. The world, our British world, is simply shackled to-day by its political and social past. "The lawless system of our laws" is too well-known to require restatement. Our Constitution, nominally unwritten and acclaimed as the most plastic of any, is of near kin to Medo-Persian institutions. "Unwritten," indeed! Do we want to know what should be done in some unexpected crisis, we search the Lancastrian, Yorkist, Tudor or Stuart scriptures, or those of the early Georges, in quest of recorded *precedents* for our guidance. We seek them as diligently as the lawyer hunts and quotes cases adjudicated four or five hundred

years ago. We swear by our jury system as "the palladium of our liberty", although it has been wrested entirely from its original purpose and character. And Parliament? Its name is too sacred to "Liberty" to be taken in vain. Yet Parliament has long outlived its initial design, and is to be suspected of having outlasted much of its primitive usefulness, if not of worse things.

Parliament, as the name tells, was at its inception a talking body—not that it has changed greatly in that respect, to the present day. But circumstances have radically changed. Parliament, in the beginning, met for the discussion of royal propositions. The early British kings cared little how much Parliament discussed, so long as there was no undue delay in voting the supplies demanded. Parliaments clearly understood this, and governed themselves accordingly. Kings ruled in those days. Parliaments supplied their needs, or demands. We have changed all that. Parliaments now make the laws, and govern. Kings obey. A king was capable of ruling. A Parliament is not. Yet we are content to retain Parliament as an imaginary governing body, in spite of its inherited name—the only thing about it which is not a misnomer and an anachronism. Parliament was constituted to discuss and, in a pinch, to advise. It was not constituted to govern, nor is it fitted to do so. It has simply appropriated to itself the royal power which it cannot properly exercise. In addition to its natural limitations, due to ordinarily divided counsels, it is further hampered by separation into parties and groups. It can act, at best, only by compromise. It seldom, if ever, is able to ask itself if this or that is absolutely right. It must usually be content with the introduction of as little as possible of known wrong into its measures. And it must talk and talk and talk, not about matters of real public concern, or in the discussion of questions submitted to it by responsible governing authority, but for the gratification mainly of personal vanity, or the furtherance of individual interests in some coming election.

Everybody knows these to be facts. Nobody defends them. Yet all rest passively content with the maintenance of a twisted and distorted political superstructure on a ruined foundation, simply because it has been, and therefore, by the logic of inertia, should continue to be. Of course we could not summarily abolish Parliament, cast aside the Constitution, and establish a brand-new governing scheme fresh from the brain-pan of some modern crank whose name is Legion; but we might and could be taking a little thought for the morrow and its requirements. We might at least try to accustom ourselves to the idea that what were useful in-

stitutions five or six hundred years ago, or excellent institutions one hundred years ago, may now have outlived their usefulness and fast be becoming a danger instead of a safety, a source of weakness and not of strength.

To propose reform specifically in so momentous a thing as this, is to be temerarious indeed. Yet, keeping in mind that true reform is never revolution but merely reconstruction or renovation on existing lines, it may be comparatively safe to suggest that much might be accomplished by the relegation of Parliament to its original functions, which were the discussion of propositions specially and formally submitted by competent authority. The primary authority was the monarch. The restoration of his original power is now out of the question. But why might not Parliament institute some new, special, governing authority as, for example, a very small Commission of its own members? Such a body, presided over by the king or his representative, might safely be entrusted during the legal parliamentary term with all the powers once exercised by the sovereign. It would need to summon Parliament only for the voting of supplies, upon which occasions, as of old, the members would be able to demand and secure "the redress of grievances." Or Parliament might be called when special popular advice of any kind was required. Such a plan might give us real government and independent legislation, instead of government and legislation by compromise, when not by crookedness. It would give us pointed because directed discussion, instead of aimless and often silly talk. It would give us concentrated personal responsibility, instead of diffused partisanism relieved of all real responsibility. In a word, it would be the approximate restoration of our original Constitution stript of its early absolutism.

WHAT is more requisite for desirable social evolution than education? Could anything be more obstructive to it than our so-called "popular education"? Education has even lost sight of its own original meaning, and has come to signify mere learning, or the acquiring of information. It shows little discrimination as to the kind of information which it is important to acquire or impart. Education, when that which it signified was first undertaken, had a totally different view of its proper functions. Its aims were mental development, moral and social elevation. No knowledge which did not serve to promote these ends was considered of educational worth. It sought to equip

the chosen few as missionaries to the masses. Its present ambition appears to be to stuff the masses with facts, for their supposed benefit in their corporate capacity as that vague entity, the State. As general intelligence has become more requisite, owing to the rise of democracy, it has been made more and more impossible by modern conceptions and modern methods of education. In short, education is being drowned in "information." Its moral as well as its spiritual aspects are overlooked or scorned. It has been petrified into hard and dull materialism. What "leading out" of the human mind and soul can there be through such a medium? The world made its greatest progress in knowledge and thought while the masses were scholastically unlearned. Earth's great ones then educated themselves by the infinite pains of observation, research and study. When they had trained and developed their minds, they drew to their side select bands of disciples to whom they imparted their wisdom, and who went forth to diffuse it among those fitted and willing not merely to receive but to increase and spread it still more widely. There was no thrusting of "education" on the unwilling or unfit in those wise days, the days of genuine philosophers. It was reserved, although in no narrow or exclusive spirit, for the worthy and the capable.

By stupidly false inferences from the past we have restricted rather than diffused the benefits of education. As usual, ignorant sentimentalists have led us astray. Persons who had acquired "the rudiments of education," that is, the mechanical means of securing a degree of instruction for themselves, by reading, jumped to the conclusion that they were already educated, and that all, however unfit, were being wronged if not accorded similar privileges. Hence the demand for universal, free education at the expense of the State for its own supposed benefit even more than for the happiness or well-being of its citizens. The outcome was our common schools. Is it necessary to ask if those schools have fulfilled or are fulfilling what was predicted and expected of them? Have they even done away with popular illiteracy, comparatively so-called, since most are really illiterate? Recent Canadian statistics do not seem to indicate that they have. How many of all the pupils that "graduate" from them annually are made better citizens than they would otherwise have been or become? Consider the subjects which they "teach"—the three R's, in such a way that they are mostly repulsive or useless ever afterwards to all but the exceptional few; Grammar, which so many teachers ignore in their own pedagogic speech; History, which, whatever its relationship to the present, has usually scarcely any with the actual past, and

which at best is only for the already *educated* and experienced; Geography, which might be interesting from map and globe, but which, in encyclopaedic form, presenting mostly useless facts, made more so because of perpetual change, serves as mere memory-clogging rubbish. Such is our common-school course. Only a small percentage of pupils ever complete, or nearly complete it, and a still smaller proceed to anything better beyond—if anything much better is to be found beyond. And this precious course not only contemplates no time or opportunity for the development of the young, but utterly disregards their spiritual nature, makes no provision for their moral training, and even neglects their ordinary social manners.

Moreover, by “scientific classification,” for the convenience of the teachers of graded schools, our “educational system” carefully provides for the suppression of anything indicative of special ability in pupils. A year’s work is prescribed for each class. It is of such a character that it can be completed not merely by the pupil of average ability, but by pupils far below that standard in mental capacity. It is indisputable that in almost any ordinary class there is a considerable percentage of pupils who could easily do the prescribed work, and do it much better, in half of the time prescribed. There are usually a few who could do it in a fourth of that time. Sometimes there are one or two who could do it in a tenth of the time. In plain words, our graded school arrangements are made and maintained in accordance with the limitations of the duller pupils. Ordinary ability is grievously handicapped. Genius is stifled in its birth. If it were not for our rural schools, in which such grading is impossible, and in which the capable teacher is still at liberty to recognize, encourage and assist special ability, we should be in a much more parlous state than we are. The popular superstition is that country conditions favour mental development. Rural-school conditions have much more to do with it. And it is much to the credit of our country folk that each section of them almost invariably takes great local pride in its outstanding “scholars”, and gives its teachers generous credit for hastening their advancement.

All these things, which ought not so to be, are permitted to go on year after year, in utter disregard of what education actually is or should be. The discouragement or repression of special ability in our schools continues, in face of the known success of the work which Denmark has done and is doing upon a directly opposite theory. Knowledge of Copenhagen’s school system and record is readily accessible to the directors and upholders of our system.

That knowledge is being applied, with the necessary modifications, in England. We, in Canada, are apparently content to plod along not merely in the ways of our fathers, but in far less desirable or excusable ways. Instead of regarding education as a "leading out," we are persistently and increasingly using the thing so named as a means of *forcing in*. There is only one drop of balm for any of us. Bad as our schools are, those of the United States are, if possible, worse. Democracy may know how to govern itself admirably. It is giving a poor exhibition of educating itself.

IT is always to be kept in mind that what, from a close point of view, may look like retrogression may really be progress. It is at least to be hoped that this may be the case with regard to what is known as the labour movement. Otherwise, it would be unpleasant enough to contemplate. Ignorance and prejudice are obviously supplying its momentum. But, behind them, is there not justice and right as the antitheses of oppression and wrong? The poor we have always had with us, and always shall have. Our poor are the socially weak. The strong have been and still are the rich. They are the natural employers of the weak, who, unfortunately, cannot be choosers, and must therefore supply the ranks of coarse and unskilled labour. This is Nature's as well as man's law. It cannot be repealed or altered. It is not to be resisted. The leaders of organized labour—who are not so much men of little education as they are themselves the victims of false teaching—have been sedulously indoctrinating their followers with the virus of Marxism, by which their own minds have been poisoned. Their dominant idea, taken from Karl Marx, is that capital, although "the product of labour alone," is the constant enemy and oppressor of labour, upon which unceasing and relentless war must be waged until it has either been destroyed or taken exclusive possession of by labour. There could be no more stupid or dangerous nonsense than this, as nearly all intelligent workers of every class are aware. But it is nonsense well fitted to impress and influence the ignorant, the discontented or the envious.

Capital is not the product of labour alone. It is the joint product of capital, of management, and of labour, none of which, by itself, could produce it. Instead of being the enemy of labour it is its stronger fellow-labourer, and equally dependent with it on the success of their joint enterprises. Management is simply a sublimated form of labour. Without capital there would be neither labour or management. Before it, there was neither, as

the condition of all primitive peoples proves. There was a period in the history of every nation when it possessed no capital other than that represented by the implements of its livelihood gained by hunting, fishing, herdsman'ship or agriculture. Those were the days of barbarism or semi-barbarism. Progress was imperceptible until capital came. Whence did it come? From one of two sources—savings or plunderings. Probably it came mainly, at first, from plunderings, and their accompaniment of slavery and enforced labour. No matter what its source, it was a blessing, for it made stable conditions of life, and consequent progress towards civilization possible. It is mere childishness to hark back to those days, and lay it as a charge against capital that it originated in the enslavement of labour, or that it still aims at such enslavement.

No sane person will now assert that capital originates in plunder, or is founded on slavery or even on oppression. Industrial capital to-day is almost exclusively the product of individual work and economy. It is the meagre savings of multitudes of small earners, nearly all of them actual labourers, poured in unceasing streams into the banks or invested in industrial or financial stocks and bonds, which keep the wheels of machinery turning and afford employment to labour. The working man, who ignorantly cries out against capital as his enemy, is denouncing the more industrious and saving of his fellows, and antagonizing his own means of livelihood.

The thing which the ordinary labourer does not understand, and is having his mind deliberately beclouded by his leaders so that he can not understand, is that capital and industry have entered upon a new era. The old order has practically passed. The great individual capitalist and employer has almost ceased to exist. He has even come to be lamented occasionally, because, as alleged, relations between master and man were more human and satisfactory under him. But he is as good as gone, and a new industrial day has dawned. The change originated with the rise of corporate banking, and perhaps can best be studied in its development. There was a time, not so long ago, when the money-dealer was an individual. As business increased, he was found too weak to serve it adequately. So he was forced to associate himself with others in supplying large loans, and the joint-stock bank sprang from the association. The capital of the new bank was supplied by the comparatively poor as well as by the rich, on the inducement of security and reasonable earnings for their investments. Was that capital the enemy or the friend of industry and labour? When industrial joint-stock companies came to be organized in imitation

of the bank, was their capital, from identical sources, likely to be more inimical to industry and labour?

It was here that the radical change in modern conditions of industry came in, without being recognized. Even yet it has not been perceived by labour; and the eyes of most others are holden so that they cannot see. Labour is still convinced that its quarrel, if it necessarily has one, is with capital, whereas it is entirely with management. All are aware of the reputation for arrogance that the average bank-manager endures—a reputation in which even his junior clerks sometimes seem to aspire to share, that they may participate in reflected glory. It is not the capital of his bank's numerous and often humble stock-holders which is arrogant, unsympathetic or tyrannical, but the individual manager or member of his staff. All that his stock-holders ask or expect is fair interest on their investments. All that the bank's President and Directors demand is a due return for the loans which they make for the maintenance of industry and employment. What is true of the bank is true of every joint-stock industrial organization whether in, say, mining, manufacturing or any other form of co-operation.

These are the rudimentary facts which labour needs to get into its organized head as soon as possible. It needs to realize without delay that its quarrel, if and when it has a justifiable one, is now with management and not at all with capital. Capital is the sole source of labour's income. Without it the labourer might starve. The conditions under which he has to earn his income are due exclusively to management. Labour's struggles for improvement should therefore be directed to the amelioration and improvement of management. It can hope for success only through the re-introduction of the world-old, human element in industry. Understanding instead of hostility must be established between management and labour. Capital will be found more than willing to assist. It is all to its own interest to do so. Labour may rest assured that management will defend the source of its income as long and as often as it is menaced. Let capital therefore be left entirely out of the question; let Karl Marx's false and mis-leading "political economy" be forgotten as it should have been long ago, and let labour and management fight it out between them, if fight they must. But would it not be infinitely better for them to look each other steadily in the face as brothers in the same walk of life, and settle their differences with as little friction and ill-feeling as they can? The sooner they do so, the better will it be for both and for the world at large.

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