

The measure of progress is not the degree of racial unification, of political centralization, or of unreflective happiness, but rather the degree and the extent of individual personality. Racial unification, political centralization, and increasing happiness are in the attainment of progress, but they are not to be viewed as sufficient ends. Personality can alone be that end. The wide development of personality, therefore, is at once the goal and the criterion of progress.

## IV

## THE METHOD OF PROGRESS

**P**ROGRESS as an ideal is quite modern in its origin. For although the ancients were progressing, they did it unconsciously, blindly, stumbling on it by chance, forced to it, as we have seen, by the struggle for existence. True of the ancient civilizations of Europe and Western Asia and Africa, this is emphatically true of the Orient. Here, so far from seeking to progress, the avowed aim has been not to progress; the set purpose has been to do as the fathers did; to follow their example even in customs and rites whose meaning has been lost in the obscurity of the past. This blind adherence was the boast of those who called themselves religious. They strove to fulfill their duties to their ancestors.

Under such conditions how was progress possible? And how has it come to pass that, ruled by this ideal until less than fifty years ago, Japan is now facing quite the other way? The passion of the nation to-day is to make the greatest possible progress in every direction. Here is an anomaly, a paradox; progress made in spite of its rejection; and, recently, a total volte-face. How shall we explain this paradox?

In our chapter on the Principles of National Evolution,\* we see that the first step in progress was made through the development of enlarging communities by means of extending boundaries and hardening customs. We see that, on reaching this stage, the great problem was so to break the "cake of custom" as to give liberty to individuals whereby to secure the needful variations. We do not consider how this was to be accomplished. We merely show that, if further progress was to be

\*Chapter xxix. Some may care to read this chapter at this point.

made, it could only be through the development of the individualistic principle to which we give the more exact name communo-individualism. This problem as to how the "cake of custom" is successfully broken must now engage our attention.

Mr. Bagehot contends that this process consisted, as a matter of history, in the establishment of government by discussion. Matters of principle came to be talked over; the desirability of this or that measure was submitted to the people for their approval or disapproval. This method served to stimulate definite and practical thought on a wide scale; it substituted the thinking of the many for the thinking of the few; it stimulated independent thinking and consequently independent action. This is, however, but another way of saying that it stimulated variation. A government whose action was determined after wide discussion would be peculiarly fitted to take advantage of all useful variations of ideas and practice. Experience shows, he continues, that the difficulty of developing a "cake of custom" is far more easily surmounted than that of developing government by discussion; *i. e.*, that it is far less difficult to develop communalism than communo-individualism. The family of arrested civilizations, of which China and India and Japan, until recent times, are examples, were caught in the net of what had once been the source of their progress. The tyranny of their laws and customs was such that all individual variations were nipped in the bud. They failed to progress because they failed to develop variations. And they failed in this because they did not have government by discussion.

No one will dispute the importance of Mr. Bagehot's contribution to this subject. But it may be doubted whether he has pointed out the full reason for the difficulty of breaking the "cake of custom" or manifested the real root of progress. To attain progress in the full sense, not merely of an oligarchy or a caste, but of the whole people, there must not only be government by discussion, but the responsibilities of the government must be shared more or less fully by all the governed.

History, however, shows that this cannot take place until a conception of intrinsic manhood and womanhood has arisen, a conception which emphasizes their infinite and inherent worth. This conception is not produced by government by discussion, while government by discussion is the necessary consequence of the wide acceptance of this conception. It is therefore the real root of progress.

As I look over the history of the Orient, I find no tendency to discover the inherent worth of man or to introduce the principle of government by discussion. Left to themselves, I see no probability that any of these nations would ever have been able to break the thrall of their customs, and to reach that stage of development in which common individuals could be trusted with a large measure of individual liberty. Though I can conceive that Japan might have secured a thorough-going political centralization under the old régime, I cannot see that that centralization would have been accompanied by growing liberty for the individual or by such constitutional rights for the common man as he enjoys to-day. Whatever progress she might have made in the direction of nationality it would still have been a despotism. The common man would have remained a helpless and hopeless slave. Art might have prospered; the people might have remained simple-minded and relatively contented. But they could not have attained that freedom and richness of life, that personality, which we saw in our last chapter to be the criterion and goal of true progress.

If the reader judges the above contention correct and agrees with the writer that the conception of the inherent value of a human being could not arise spontaneously in Japan, he will conclude that the progress of Japan depended on securing this important conception from without. Exactly this has taken place. By her thorough-going abandonment of the feudal social order and adoption of the constitutional and representative government of Christendom, whether she recognizes it or not, she has accepted the principles of the inherent worth of manhood and womanhood, as well as

government by discussion. Japan has thus, by imitation rather than by origination, entered on the path of endless progress.

So important, however, is the step recently taken that further analysis of this method of progress is desirable for its full comprehension. We have already noted quite briefly\* how Japan was supplied by the West with the ideal of national unity and the material instruments essential to its attainment. In connection with the high development of the nation as a whole, these two elements of progress, the ideal and the material, need further consideration.

We note in the first place that both begin with imitation, but if progress is to be real and lasting, both must grow to independence.

The first and by far the most important is the psychical, the introduction of new ideas. So long as the old, familiar ideas hold sway over the mind of a nation, there is little or no stimulus to comparison and discussion. Stagnation is well-nigh complete. But let new ideas be so introduced as to compel attention and comprehension, and the mind spontaneously awakes to wonderful activity. The old stagnation is no longer possible. Discussion is started; and in the end something must take place, even if the new ideas are not accepted wholly or even in part. But they will not gain attention if presented simply in the abstract, unconnected with real life. They must bring evidence that, if accepted and lived, they will be of practical use, that they will give added power to the nation.

Exactly this took place in 1854 when Admiral Perry demanded entrance to Japan. The people suddenly awoke from their sleep of two and a half centuries to find that new nations had arisen since they closed their eyes, nations among which new sets of ideas had been at work, giving them a power wholly unknown to the Orient and even mysterious to it. Those ideas were concerned, not alone with the making of guns, the building of ships, the invention of machinery, the taming and using of the forces of nature, but also with methods

\* Cf. chapter ii.

of government and law, with strange notions, too, about religion and duty, about the family and the individual, which the foreigners said were of inestimable value and importance. It needed but a few years of intercourse with Western peoples to convince the most conservative that unless the Japanese themselves could gain the secret of their power, either by adopting their weapons or their civilization, they themselves must fade away before the stronger nations. The need of self-preservation was the first great stimulus that drove new thoughts into unwilling brains.

There can be no doubt that the Japanese were right in this analysis of the situation. Had they insisted on maintaining their old methods of national life and social order and ancient customs, there can be no doubt as to the result. Africa and India in recent decades and China and Korea in the most recent years tell the story all too clearly. Those who know the course of treaty conferences and armed collisions, as at Shimonoseki and Kagoshima between Japan and the foreign nations, have no doubt that Japan, divided into clans and persisting in her love of feudalism, would long since have become the territory of some European Power. She was saved by the possession of a remarkable combination of national characteristics,—the powers of observation, of appreciation, and of imitation. In a word, her sensitiveness to her environment and her readiness to respond to it proved to be her salvation.

But the point on which I wish to lay special emphasis is that the prime element of the form in which the deliverance came was through the acquisition of numerous new ideas. These were presented by persons who thoroughly believed in them and who admittedly had a power not possessed by the Japanese themselves. Though unable to originate these ideas, the Japanese yet proved themselves capable of understanding and appreciating them—in a measure at least. They were at first attracted to that which related chiefly to the externals of civilization, to that which would contribute immediately to the complete political centralization of the nation. With great rapidity they adopted Western

ideas about warfare and weapons. They sent their young men abroad to study the civilization of the foreign nations. At great expense they also employed many foreigners to teach them in their own land the things they wished to learn. Thus have the Japanese mastered so rapidly the details of those ideas which, less than fifty years ago, were not only strange but odious to them.

Under their influence, the conditions which history shows to be the most conducive to the continuous growth of civilization have been definitely accepted and adopted by the people, namely, popular rights, the liberty of individuals to differ from the past so far as this does not interfere with national unity, and the direct responsibility and relation of each individual to the nation without any mediating group. These rights and liberties are secured to the individual by a constitution and by laws enacted by representative legislatures. Government by discussion has been fairly inaugurated.

During these years of change the effort has been to leave the old social order as undisturbed as possible. For example, it was hoped that the reorganization of the military and naval forces of the Empire would be sufficient without disturbing the feudal order and without abolishing the feudal states. But this was soon found ineffectual. For a time it was likewise thought that the adoption of Western methods of government might be made without disturbing the old religious ideas and without removing the edicts against Christianity. But experience soon showed that the old civilization was a unit. No part could be vitally modified without affecting the whole structure. Having knocked over one block in the long row that made up their feudal social order, it was found that each successive block was touched and fell, until nothing was left standing as before. It was found also that the old ideas of education, of travel, of jurisprudence, of torture and punishment, of social ranks, of the relation of the individual to the state, of the state to the family, and of religion to the family, were more or less defective and unsuited to the new civilization. Before this new movement all obstructive

ideas, however, sanctioned by antiquity, have had to give way. The Japanese of to-day look, as it were, upon a new earth and a new heaven. Those of forty years ago would be amazed, not only at the enormous changes in the externals, life and government, but also at the transformation which has overtaken every element of the older civilization. Putting it rather strongly, it is now not the son who obeys the father, but the father the son. The rulers no longer command the people, but the people command the rulers. The people do not now toil to support the state; but the state toils to protect the people.

Whether the incoming of these new ideas and practices be thought to constitute progress or not will depend on one's view of the aim of life. If this be as maintained in the previous chapter, then surely the transformation of Japan must be counted progress. That, however, to which I call attention is the fact that the essential requisite of progress is the attainment of new ideas, whatever be their source. Japan has not only taken up a great host of these, but in doing so she has adopted a social structure to stimulate the continuous production of new ideas, through the development of individuality. She is thus in the true line of continuously progressive evolution. Imitating the stronger nations, she has introduced into her system the life-giving blood of free discussion, popular education, and universal individual rights and liberty. In a word, she has begun to be an individualistic nation. She has introduced a social order fitted to a wide development of personality.

The importance of the second line of progress, the physical, would seem to be too obvious to call for any detailed consideration. But so much has been said by both graceful and able writers on Japan as to the advantages she enjoys from her simple non-mechanical civilization, and the mistake she is making in adopting the mechanical civilization of the West, that it may not be amiss to dwell for a few moments upon it. I wish to show that the second element of progress consists in the *increasing use of mechanisms*.

The enthusiastic admirer of Japan hardly finds words wherewith sufficiently to praise the simplicity of her pre-Meiji civilization. No furniture brings confusion to the room; no machinery distresses the ear with its groanings or the eye with its unsightliness. No factories blacken the sky with smoke. No trains screeching through the towns and cities disturb sleepers and frighten babies. The simple bed on the floor, the straw sandal on the foot, wooden chopsticks in place of knives and forks, the small variety of foods and of cooking utensils, the simple, homespun cotton clothing, the fascinating homes, so small and neat and clean—in truth all that pertains to Old Japan finds favor in the eyes of the enthusiastic admirer from the Occident. One such writer, in an elaborate paper intended to set forth the superiority of the original Japanese to the Occidental civilization, uses the following language: "Ability to live without furniture, without impedimenta, with the least possible amount of neat clothing, shows more than the advantage held by the Japanese race in the struggle of life; it shows also the real character of some of the weaknesses in our own civilization. It forces reflection upon the useless multiplicity of our daily wants. We must have meat and bread and butter; glass windows and fire; hats, white shirts, and woolen underwear; boots and shoes; trunks, bags, and boxes; bedsteads, mattresses, sheets, and blankets; all of which a Japanese can do without, and is really better off without." \* Surely one finds much of truth in this, and there is no denying the charm of the simpler civilization, but the closing phrase of the quotation is the assumption without discussion of the disputed point. Are the Japanese really better off without these implements of Western civilization? Evidently they themselves do not think so. For, in glancing through the list as given by the writer quoted, one realizes the extent of Japanese adoption of these Western devices. Hardly an article but is used in Japan, and certainly with the supposition of the purchaser that it adds either to his health or his comfort. In witness are the hundreds of

\* "Kokoro," by L. Hearn, p. 31.

thousands of straw hats, the glass windows everywhere, and the meat-shops in each town and city of the Empire. The charm of a foreign fashion is not sufficient explanation for the rapidly spreading use of foreign inventions.

That there are no useless or even evil features in our Western civilization is not for a moment contended. The stiff starched shirt may certainly be asked to give an account of itself and justify its continued existence, if it can. But I think the proposition is capable of defense that the vast majority of the implements of our Occidental civilization have their definite place and value, either in contributing directly to the comfort and happiness of their possessor, or in increasing his health and strength and general mental and physical power. What is it that makes the Occidental longer-lived than the Japanese? Why is he healthier? Why is he more intelligent? Why is he a more developed personality? Why are his children more energetic? Or, reversing the questions, why has the population of Japan been increasing with leaps and bounds since the introduction of Western civilization and medical science? Why is the rising generation so free from pockmarks? Why is the number of the blind steadily diminishing? Why are mechanisms multiplying so rapidly—the jinrikisha, the railroads, the roads, the waterworks and sewers, the chairs, the tables, the hats and umbrellas, lamps, clocks, glass windows and shoes? A hundred similar questions might be asked, to which no definite answers are needful.

Further discussion of details seems unnecessary. Yet the full significance of this point can hardly be appreciated without a perception of the great principle that underlies it. The only way in which man has become and continues to be increasingly superior to animals is in his use of mechanisms. The animal does by brute force what man accomplishes by various devices. The inventiveness of different races differs vastly. But everywhere, the most advanced are the most powerful. Take the individual man of the more developed race and separate him from his tools and machines, and it

is doubtless true that he cannot in some selected points compete with an individual of a less developed race. But let ten thousand men of the higher development compete with ten thousand of the lower, each using the mechanisms under his control, and can there be any doubt as to which is the superior?

In other words, the method of human progress consists, in no small degree, in the progressive mastery of nature, first through understanding her and then through the use of her immense forces by means of suitable mechanisms. All the machines and furniture, and tools and clothing, and houses and canned foods, and shoes and boots, and railroads and telegraph lines, and typewriters and watches, and the ten thousand other so-called "impedimenta" of the Occidental civilization are but devices whereby Western man has sought to increase his health, his wealth, his knowledge, his comfort, his independence, his capacity of travel—in a word, his well-being. Through these mechanisms he masters nature. He extracts a rich living from nature; he annihilates time and space; he defies the storms; he tunnels the mountains; he extracts precious ores and metals from the rock-ribbed hills; with a magic touch he loosens the grip of the elements and makes them surrender their gold, their silver, and, more precious still, their iron; with these he builds his spacious cities and parks, his railroads and ocean steamers; he travels the whole world around, fearing neither beast nor alien man; all are subject to his command and will. He investigates and knows the constitution of stellar worlds no less than that of the world in which he lives. By his instruments he explores the infinite depths of heaven and the no less infinite depths of the microscopic world. All these reviled "impedimenta" thus bring to the race that has them a wealth of life both physical and psychical, practical and ideal, that is otherwise unattainable. By them he gains and gives external expression to the reality of his inner nature, his freedom, his personality. True, instead of bringing health and long life, knowledge and deep enjoyment, they may become the means of bitterest curses. But the lesson to learn from this fact

is how to use these powers aright, not how to forbid their use altogether. They are not to be branded as hindrances to progress.

The defect of Occidental civilization to-day is not its multiplicity of machinery, but the defective view that still blinds the eyes of the multitude as to the true nature and the legitimate goal of progress. Individual, selfish happiness is still the ideal of too many men and women to permit of the ideal which carries the Golden Rule into the markets and factories, into the politics of parties and nations, which is essential to the attainment of the highest progress. But no one who casts his eyes over the centuries of struggle and effort through which man has been slowly working his way upward from the rank of a beast to that of a man, can doubt that progress has been made. The worth of character has been increasingly seen and its possession desired. The true end of effort and development was never more clear than it is at the close of the nineteenth century. Never before were the conditions of progress so bright, not only for the favored few in one or two lands, but for the multitudes the world over. Isolation and separation have passed from this world forever. Free social intercourse between the nations permits wide dissemination of ideas and their application to practical life in the form of social organization and mechanical invention. This makes it possible for nations more or less backward in social and civilizational development to gain in a relatively short time the advantages won by advanced nations through ages of toil and under favoring circumstances. Nation thus stimulates nation, each furnishing the other with important variations in ideas, customs, institutions, and mechanisms resulting from long-continued divergent evolution. The advantages slowly gained by advanced peoples speedily accrues through social heredity to any backward race really desiring to enter the social heritage.

Thus does the paradox of Japan's recent progress become thoroughly intelligible.