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MR. KIDD'S "SOCIAL EVOLUTION."

THE central problem of social evolution as it presents itself to Mr. Kidd may be thus briefly summarized. Modern physiological science establishes as the first condition of all progress the maintenance of that struggle among the individuals of a race which continually eliminates the less efficient and enables the more efficient to survive and multiply. Any successful attempt to suspend the struggle and to secure the survival of the unfit members will not merely check further progress but will inevitably cause a deterioration of the race. Among the lower animals, nature, acting blindly and instinctively, insures the maintenance of the struggle. But when man emerges it is different. "Now at last, science stands confronted with a creature differing in this important respect from all that have gone before him. He is endowed with reason."

Now, when reason begins to look into this "struggle," it can find no justification for the pain and misery and brutality of such a mode of progress. "To the great mass of the people, the so-called lower classes, in the advanced civilizations of today, the conditions under which they live and work are still without any rational sanction." (67) So long as the masses are kept down under strong class government, their intelligence uneducated, they remain impotent. But modern conditions of progress demand that a larger and larger proportion of the race shall be brought into the keenest rivalry of life—this keen rivalry demands equality of opportunity for all individuals. Hence the modern democratic movement making for equalization of opportunity intensifies the "struggle," the rivalry of life, and improves the pace of progress. But this equalization of opportunity, by educating the intelligence of the masses and by placing an increased portion of political and social power in their hands, raises up an enemy of social progress.

For when the popular reason is got into play, finding no rational justification for the struggle with its "natural selection," it may proceed to put a stop to it, organizing the natural resources of the race so as to secure a comfortable competence for all alike, and thus sacrificing the progress of the future of the race in the interest of the existing generation. This tendency Mr. Kidd finds to be taking shape in modern socialism. Socialism, he urges, is, in spite of some woolly-headed advocates, eminently rational; intellectual criticism cannot break down its main positions; a rationalistic community striving to make the most of the present would certainly organize itself on a socialist basis, so as to put an end to the strain and misery of the struggle for existence, thus sealing the doom of the race, which from that time must weaken, deteriorate, and eventually perish from the face of the earth.

Socialism, he urges, is not really a culmination of the democratic or humanitarian movement of the last hundred years; it is its antithesis. Though dominated chiefly by humanitarian and moral forces, the softening and deepening in the character of the power held by classes, which has brought about a series of concessions to the masses, this democratic movement is only genuinely progressive so far as it increases the rivalry of life by placing a larger and larger proportion of the population upon an equality in the competition. Socialism, by putting an end to this rivalry, is retrogressive. But is reason to have her way, and is social progress to be checked by this suicidal policy?

There is another force in eternal strife with reason—that is, religion—the eternal repository of the race-preserving instincts in all ages and all races. Scientific evolution, by ignoring religion—Mr. Kidd says it has ignored it—has neglected the one truly progressive force in history. Intellectual ascendancy has never succeeded in maintaining the power and integrity of a race. Social evolution is not engaged in raising the intellectual caliber of man: the Greeks in the age of Pericles, the Romans of the early empire, the men of our own Elizabethan era were intellectually as high and probably much higher than we are;

there is no evidence that men of different races and degrees of civilization differ in individual intellectual power ; social evolution is engaged in producing social efficiency, and it does this work by the exclusive agency of religion. The function of religion is to protect the condition of progress for a race by imposing supernatural and extra-rational sanction for conduct which reason would condemn but which is necessary for the progress of the race.

This is, in brief, the main thesis which Mr. Kidd invites us to examine. In order to get at the meaning of religion Mr. Kidd does not scorn the service of reason. Collecting definitions from a medley of thinkers, including Seneca, Comte, Matthew Arnold, Hegel, Huxley, Dr. Martineau, Mr. Kidd boils them to extract their fullest common measure. The unbiased observer who examined the medley of phenomena called "religious" would, he maintains, become possessed by one idea that "underneath all this vast series of phenomena with which he was confronted, he beheld man in some way in conflict with his own reason." (90)

It is important to recognize at the outset that Mr. Kidd's religion is wholly irrational. The systems it sets up are quite independent of all standards of intellectual truth. For religion is with him no mere vague instinct or sentiment of awe. It means religious systems with set dogmas, ordinances and ritual. Owing to this irrational impulse man everywhere is "possessed by the desire to set up sanctions for his individual conduct, which would appear to be supernatural against those which were natural, sanctions which would appear to be ultra-rational against those which were simply rational." (92)

Instead of being a "grotesque fungoid growth," these religions are the husks in which the seed of social progress is preserved and lies hid. They are the clothing of the race-preserving instincts. Let us clearly understand this position. Though Mr. Kidd tries to cast a mysterious halo of spiritual glow round this religious force it turns out to be nothing supernatural at all (though he says it is), but simply a racial feeling which

impels individuals to conduct which would be against their individual interests if they were mere individuals, instead of members of a race, conduct in which whole generations are to make sacrifices for the welfare of unborn generations—the total advantage of the race.

It is, I think, right to recognize the justice of Mr. Kidd's contention that modern sociologists, socialistic writers in particular, have exhibited a defective grasp of the social organism from the racial point of view. They have been content as a rule to work out the harmony of individual interests in a community at a given time, forgetting that the organic life which gives the full unity is the total life of a number of successive generations, constituting the history of a race. Just as an individual, being part of a society, appears to make a sacrifice of the full free development of his individuality for the sake of society, so no single generation of society lives for itself alone, but is determined in its conduct by considerations of the good of other generations. Nay further, even race life does not present a complete and isolated whole; the history of the complete race is determined by its contribution to the larger total of humanity, which again is a tributary to the vast cosmic life. Mr. Kidd's book deserves high praise for the vigorous assertion of the claim of the wider social organism upon the conduct of the several generations, and of the existence of the sentiment which supports this claim.

The race-preserving sentiment is, he rightly recognizes, analogous to the instinct by which a mother sacrifices herself for her child, only operating over a far wider sphere. Of the existence of this race-preserving force there can be no question. But is it irrational? Is it opposed to the interests of the individual or of the single generation? Can there be such antagonism between the true interests of the individual and the race as requires a special mysterious force, religion, to trick itself up in a number of fantastic and false guises (the falsity Kidd does not dispute), in order to frighten the individual into acting against his interest.

There is no such antagonism. Take the so-called sacrifice

of motherhood. Does a mother really act unreasonably and against her true interest in the sacrifices she is said to make for her children? Only when a narrow and a false view of her interest is taken. Certain suffering is undergone by her for the good of others, but in so far as she has exercised a choice, this good of her children is identified with her own good, or, as we say, "she finds her happiness in the happiness of others." The sacrifice is but a purchase of certain higher interests at the expense of lower interests, an adjustment in the true interests of the reasonable self.

The antagonism which Mr. Kidd posits between the individual and race implies a conception of society as a mere aggregate of absolutely severed selves, ignoring the common life or treating it as something separate from the life of the individuals and requiring a separate provision for its sustenance.

The fallacy lies in Mr. Kidd's conception of the struggle for existence. The struggle for the life of others is as essential a part as the struggle for one's own life—and what is more the sentiments and forces which make for the two are not really separable, because our own life is organically related to the life of others, the family, the generation, the race. Just as the mother does not really sacrifice her own good for the good of others, but seeks her good in the good of others, so it is with the struggle in its wider form. The man who reasonably seeks his own interest will (in a socially efficient race), conform to such rules of conduct as make for the welfare of the race, because such conduct will give him most satisfaction, or, to use the language of a school who mistrust utilitarian language, because such conduct contributes to the realization of his rational self.

Spencer (though failing to explain the moral sanction or the feeling of "ought"), has clearly shown how the altruistic (re-representative), motives may come into operation and, forming habits, dominate conduct. Mr. Kidd, having carefully excluded certain operative moral forces from his conception of "rational," insists on bringing them in afterward under guise of a supplementary force called religion.

Let us now try to understand a little more definitely what the function of this religion is. Is it ethical? Mr. Kidd says yes. Does it then stimulate feelings of justice and kindness, generosity and pity? The answer is "yes"—up to a certain point—and indirectly. The true work of religion, as we have seen, is to maintain the intensest form of rivalry among all the members of a race. It is true, religion also figures as the softening and broadening influence of the modern democratic and humanitarian movement; it has helped to cast the mighty from their seats and to raise the humble and meek. But Mr. Kidd is careful to remind us that it has done this not out of simple-hearted consideration for the weak and oppressed, but in order that by placing all competitors on a footing of equality in the rivalry of life the pain and misery of inevitable failure may be most economically used to forward the progress of the race. In other words it aims not at reducing the mass of misery and failure; but at ensuring that the right persons (*i. e.*, the really unfit), shall be miserable and fail. The primary object of religion is thus to intensify competition—not competition on a moral plane—but such competition as shall crush out of physical existence the least efficient members. Incidentally religion, as a factor in democratic and humanitarian movements, has made for abstract justice, but with the object of sharpening antagonism among the individuals of a society and among the races of the world at as many points as possible. A most liberal interpretation of the text, "I came not to send peace but a sword." Rivalry in its fiercest form is essential to the progress of the race, and religion stands with the sword of justice in her hand, a divine executioner of the unfortunate.

But what practical conduct does religion enjoin? In order to intensify the rivalry of life it is desirable that population should constantly outrun the means of comfortable subsistence. Hence, the first practical behest of religion is "increase and multiply."

The deep current of religious feeling which marks the Anglo-Saxon races makes for social efficiency and enables us to obtain

the ascendancy over an increasing proportion of the habitable world. France, on the other hand, though more highly developed in intellectual attainments, is defective in those moral factors which make for social efficiency, and under the impulse of reformation has decreased in population, losing the degree of ascendancy she once had among the nations.

Similarly taking a wider scope of comparison, Mr. Kidd finds the Celtic races at large superior to the Teutonic in intellectual power, but inferior in "social efficiency" (strangely ignoring the large growth of Celtic population and power in the United States of America, Canada and the Australian colonies).

Into the elaborate historical illustrations which Mr. Kidd adduces, I cannot enter here, but I may remark that his modern instances all assume that social efficiency and racial success are to be measured by counting heads, a quantitative view of progress to which I shall return presently.

Mr. Kidd thinks a reasonable limitation of the population, whatever methods are adopted, to be a wrong and selfish policy, because it "exploits in the interest of the existing generation of individuals that humanitarian movement which is providing a developmental force operating largely in the interest of future generations."

But leaving this point for the present let us look more closely at the nature of the work religion is said to do in modern social progress. Religion, which Kidd, when convenient, chooses to identify with altruistic feeling and with humanitarianism in general, is the one important force in modern progressive movements. Under the influence of this growing altruism, the power-holding classes, those who are in possession of government, of land, and of capital, have made concession after concession to the masses. Mr. Kidd explains that the growing pity and generosity of the classes, and not the power of the masses, is the force which has brought about these changes, and he has the hardihood to illustrate from the French Revolution and the English reform movement. This grotesque contention is forced upon him. For if the growing demand of the subject masses

for political and economic justice, the growing recognition and reality of their force, the ability to organize and insist upon their rights—if these are the principal direct agents of reform—not even the expansive method of Mr. Kidd can classify them under the term religion as opposed to reformation. To avoid this conclusion Mr. Kidd perverts history, attributing modern progress to the generosity of the classes. It is quite true, of course, that one condition of modern progress, of the French Revolution, and of the later steps in the road to democracy in England, has been a weakening of the moral power of resistance in the classes, owing to a vague sense of the injustice of class monopolies. Moreover, the work of education, of light and leading, has been largely done by a small number of morally emancipated members of the power-holding classes. But the direct efficient cause has in almost every case been the force of the popular demand. To speak of the Acts of Parliament which register various progressive steps in English history as voluntary concessions of the power-holding classes, is a monstrous perversion of history. Even the abolition of slavery, both for this country and for America, was not brought about until it had been demonstrated that as an industrial system slavery was uneconomical. The power-holders have never made a concession which was not wrung from them by threats, though after fear has compelled them to give way they have frequently attributed the act to their native generosity, reminding one of the story of the small boy who, when he was knocked down by a bigger comrade, remarked as he lay on the ground, that he was “just agoin’ to fall down.” The moral weakness of the position of the power-holding classes is a condition of the success of popular agitation and popular force, but it is not the cause; the concession is no more voluntary than that of the traveler who yields up his purse when a pistol is placed at his head.

But let us assume that Mr. Kidd is correct in his interpretation of the progressive movement as a voluntary concession of power by the classes, and that religion is the name of the force which induces the classes to act contrary to the dictates of

rational self-interest, how far can this movement proceed? A good many of these progressive steps tend to socialism. Will religion lead to socialism? "No!" says Mr. Kidd, emphatically, "No!" Socialism he conceives as a mechanical organization of society with the special object of putting down the struggle for life and therefore stopping the spring of progress.

A socialistic state will insist on securing the best terms for all members of the present and next generation. It will effect this by suspending the struggle for existence upon the physical plane. Weaklings will no longer be weeded out, population will be regulated within the bounds of comfortable subsistence; rejection of the unfit being taken away the race will lapse into decay. Here we must observe that Mr. Kidd shows no grasp of the evolutionary character of socialism. An antagonism similar to that between reason and religion he finds between equalization of opportunity and socialism. Now no such antagonism exists. Socialism in its philosophical limitation is nothing else than the progressive equalization of opportunities. Beginning by equalizing opportunities to live and to get a fair start in food and other physical requirements, it proceeds to the equalization of opportunity for good work and good wages, for higher education, and for the attainment of intellectual and spiritual wealth; it achieves this equalization of opportunity by putting down some lower form of struggle, in order that the struggle may take a higher and intenser form. When all mankind was placed upon absolutely equal terms of competition in the rivalry of life, the ideal of socialism would be attained.

The policy of equalization of opportunity hitherto pursued is not antagonistic to socialism, but simply marks the early stages in the continuous march of mankind toward a higher organic social life.

But Mr. Kidd might urge, "You admit that the struggle for physical life is likely to be suspended; that admission is fatal, involving the necessary deterioration of the race." But here I think Mr. Kidd's position is open to a twofold criticism. He approves the modern democratic humanitarian movement, on

the ground that by promoting equality of opportunity it spreads and intensifies the rivalry of life. But many, if not most, of the steps in this movement repress the struggle on the purely physical plane. Poor laws and sanitary legislation, for example, are directly engaged in securing the continued existence of those whom the physical struggle would eliminate through hunger or disease. With severer logic Mr. Herbert Spencer has protested against such legislation because its object is to keep alive those "unfit" persons whose sacrifice was demanded in the interest of society. Mr. Kidd even stamps with his approval education acts and the eight-hour movement, though the very *raison d'être* of such movements is to relieve the strain of the physical struggle.

But even assuming that this stern deduction of Weismannism were correct, the "rejection" of the unfit, which is essential to progress, can be secured by a less barbarous method than the homicidal practices consecrated by Mr. Kidd's religion. The simple wisdom of the saying that "Prevention is better than cure" can surely never be so fully justified as where killing is the cure that is advocated.

Mr. Kidd asserts that socialism would place restrictions upon population, and that such restrictions would cause progressive degeneration of the race. Here he begs a very important question, the question whether society cannot secure the rejection of the unfit much more effectually than it is now secured, by sternly repressing the anti-social conduct which produces the physically unfit. Might not a society which knew how to look after its own interests and the interests of future generations protect itself more effectively by enjoining on its members the command: "Thou shalt not kill, but needst not strive officiously to *make* alive."

No socialist community could fail to recognize that marriage and production of children were the most important social acts; that society had a clear right to determine what sort of children should be born, seeing that society had both to support them and to depend upon them for support. I do not mean that such society need unduly and vexatiously interfere with freedom of

individual choice, so as to say what marriages should take place, but it would certainly claim to say what marriages should not take place. Every intelligent society, socialist or other, would consider it as a first duty to prohibit unsocial unions, would prevent the propagation of physical, mental and moral disease. I do not say that such restraints need depend on legislation, though legal restraints are clearly justifiable ; the voice of public opinion in an educated community, the majesty of the venerable Mrs. Grundy herself, might suffice to maintain and to improve the physical fitness of the race by imposing sterility upon the physically unfit of each generation. Mr. Kidd seems to think that nature has got to work in the same blind, crude, wasteful fashion when she is operating through self-conscious reasonable man as when she is operating on the lowest amoeba. He seems to think that legislative restrictions upon populations would be in some sense interferences with the course of nature, or to use a phrase of Mr. Spencer, attempts "to fight against the constitution of things." But the social will expressing itself either by public opinion or through an act of parliament is just as much a natural force as any other, and by a favorable disposition of physiological conditions is capable of securing physical progress.

Taking a wide perspective we have before us two alternative views of social progress—one quantitative, the other qualitative.

Quantitative progress says ; "Breed freely, so that those below the physical average may be killed off and the stronger may multiply, and bursting the too narrow limits of their original home may swarm and encroach upon the lands of feebler folk, ruthlessly extirpating these natives when the latter stand in the way of their ascendancy, or else compelling them to toil and to give up the profits of their labor to the owners of Maxim guns and superior machinery."

This progress is measured in square miles of territory, bales of cotton goods and millions of low class English lives, which are engaged in cut-throat competition of military or commercial rivalry. This appears to be Mr. Kidd's way of measuring progress.

Qualitative progress consists in limiting the quantity of new

life that we may raise the quality—the process of higher individualism which can only be attained by putting down the physical rivalry which induces only physical fitness, and substituting higher forms of rivalry which evoke higher fitnesses, measuring progress not in terms of lower material products or in terms of population, but in terms of highest human character; keeping down quantity of life with the direct object of limiting the proportion of energy which goes into the baser struggles of war and industry, in order that a larger proportion may be devoted to higher forms of effort, producing a race distinguished for high and varied mental and moral caliber. This society in which rivalry of life on lower planes is repressed can alone become socially efficient and coherent, because here alone will the bonds of common interest between individual and individual be numerous and strong. The way for a society to become socially efficient is to economize all force spent upon rivalry of physical life, so as to divert it into the maintenance of higher and more profitable forms of rivalry.

Mr. Kidd still seems to incline to the belief that “the anti-social qualities of men and not their social qualities, are what furnish the cohesive force of society.” His arguments repose upon a sliding scale of phrases, by means of which he passes unseen from one position to another and thence to a third. We are all familiar with a conjuring performance entitled the “hat trick,” in which the wizard takes out of a hat, which was previously shown to be empty, a string of sausages, a bowl of gold fish and other marvels which he had inserted by sleight of hand during the performance. Mr. Kidd’s method is analogous. After elaborate analysis and argument, he discovers in a remote conclusion something which he had himself carefully inserted in an original premise, or he finds out some defect in a theory, which defect he has provided for by a defective definition of the theory. Religion is essentially ultra-rational because he has chosen to define reason so as to exclude from it the emotional; it is supernatural because he has posited the supernatural. Socialism is unethical because he has chosen, in the teeth of history, to identify it with rationalism and, an

equally unwarrantable assumption, to exclude from rationalism all that belongs to ethics.

Now I say plainly this is juggling. Mr. Kidd packs the cards in favor of social efficiency, which means ethics, which means a fund of altruism, which means supernatural sanctions, which means religious dogmatism, which means Protestantism. The great discovery that the real aim of social evolution is the development of higher social efficiency and the survival of races in proportion to their social efficiency, is nothing else than a purely verbal proposition. It does not need a big book to tell us that the object of social development is to develop social qualities.

All this mixed thought comes from dabbling in a brand new physiological theory like that of Weismann, which, at any rate in the strict form in which Mr. Kidd accepts it, stands upon the miraculous position that a portion of the human organism, to wit, the germ plasm, can be in organic connection with the rest of the body and yet can remain wholly unaffected by the chemical and physiological experiences that body undergoes during a life time—that this germ plasm is sustained by the body and is yet untouched by the influences which affect the quality of its sustenance, an assumption which for pure effrontery has no parallel outside the Athanasian creed, and which no amount of direct inductive evidence could establish or even render conceivable.

What then is the interest and worth of this book? Setting aside the literary skill, which is considerable, and the thoughtful handling of many interesting modern topics which lie across the path of the argument, there is evidently something in Mr. Kidd's central theory which appeals strongly to a large number of fairly educated people. What is it? The answer I think is this. There has been a rapidly growing feeling among large numbers of those who still cleave to the orthodox churches, that the intellectual foundations of religion have slipped away. They are not rationalists, most of them have never seriously examined the rational basis of their creed, but the disturbing influences of rational criticism have reached them in the shape of this vague uneasy feeling. Now these people, morally weak because they have relied upon dogmatic supports of conduct, are ready to

grasp eagerly at a theory which shall save their religious systems in a manner which seems consistent with the maintenance of modern culture.

If reason can only be induced to make a voluntary cession of a certain sphere of territory to religion—give a rational sanction to religion to be irrational—then all is achieved. Mr. Kidd is by no means the first to essay this task, but he is one of the boldest, for he does not hesitate to say that religion is wholly without rational sanction.

The element of truth which Mr. Kidd has brought into prominence is the fact that an ethical motive does not derive its force from the intellect, and that ethical progress in an individual or a race is not necessarily correspondent with intellectual progress. What he assumes, but does not prove, is that ethical motives can only operate through definite religious systems, and that the recognition of the value of the "fund of altruism" gives validity to religious forms which are animated by some portion of the ethical spirit.

Mr. Kidd has powerfully emphasized the "irrationality" (in his sense) of the altruistic forces. But he has neglected to recognize that all other motive forces are equally "irrational," and that those which incite a man to selfish conduct are just as irrational as any other. Our likes and dislikes, our estimate of pleasures and pains, that aggregate valuation of vital forces which forms the active character of a man or a race, are irrational in the sense that the intellect (Mr. Kidd's reason) only enables one to see correctly the results which attend the pursuit of likes and dislikes. Moral force can never be directly generated by intellectual machinery.

Once let us realize that it is the real interest of the individual to act in harmony with the total well-being of the society to which he belongs, and that it is the true interest of this generation to care for succeeding generations—that human nature contains desires making for the realization of this wider self which it would be painful to thwart—ethical conduct is at once justified, and the false antagonism of individual and social welfare disappears.

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