

Written for this Paper.

PHILOSOPHICAL PROGRESSION.

Human nature possesses its curious side as well as its admirable one, and a momentary glance is not sufficient to divide the two, or to explain always the ascendancy of one over the other. Things—good things may be done under pressure, say of counsel or circumstances; the pressure being removed there is reaction, and permanence in the best direction is not secured, because the act was not voluntary, it did not carry with it the heart.

From the time that the child is as it were compelled to go to school, secular or Sabbath, there comes a disposition to sneak, to get a holiday stealthily or on the most flimsy excuse. Children compelled to go to meeting, through the spirit of resistance and independence, often become altogether indifferent to a practice which contains within itself essential good. It was imperative on us when we were lads that we should bring home the text and know the preacher. But when other boys presented the temptation of green fields and nooks of fern, or the joyous, rippling, dancing brook, we simply got the required information and the sunny Sabbath afternoon was by stealth our very own. Not that we always felt well under practical and punishable disobedience, but this was our passive or active rebellion against what we dreamt was tyrannical interference.

Oh, how many men and women, particularly the first, are still but "children of a larger growth!" To prohibit a thing is to foster hypocrisy, and at times there is an ostentatious obedience which is suspicious at the best, and then an utter and inexcusable neglect. Was there ever a community more urged than this to learn the alphabet of political economy and industrial salvation? To create, establish and sustain home manufactures? And it was done in times of outer pressure when nothing else could be secured. Our crockery might have lacked finish; our brooms might contain material enough for two; furniture be limited in variety and commonplace in style; soap made at our own fireside or by semi-professionals might be caustic and fail to foam; the spinning-wheel and loom might, like an incipient factory, turn out a harsh flannel or a piece of stiff sheep's gray or jeans for pants; our home-made hats (sombbrero-like) might have carried in them material for half a dozen; the straw goods made by many earnest sisters might have been coarse in plait; our leather might have been half-tripey and shoes heavy; all these, with many other things, like nails, pistols, knives, tubs, rope, blankets, woolen yarn might have lacked finish—but the people were in earnest mainly, improvement was the motto, and such goods when made compulsorily were yet evidences of enterprise; they filled a want; they glorified our annual fairs, and at the time pride in these products was hearty at least.

Spite of all advice, when imported goods came, past achievements dwindled, and today we have not recovered in ourselves or our posterity from those early days of enforced restraint. Then when merchandizing became fashion-

able and profitable, when it was mainly in stranger hands and leading men began to realize that the people were warming vipers in their bosom, the word went out, "Sustain your friends!" Who does not remember the shuffling, dodging and sneaking ways of many? For them to be so advised was to command resistance and to guarantee rebellion. Every excuse of price, quality, variety, necessity was urged by those who were discovered. Excuses were thick as snowflakes, and the outsider waxed fat and flourished, until in sheer self-defense against outside and inside dealers, co-operative merchandizing was really the necessity and salvation of that day.

This movement became almost universal for the time. It saved the people millions of dollars, and as an aid to home manufactures it took a decided stand. Factories began to grow again and co-operation designedly failed to import articles which men at home were struggling to create. Importers increased who overlooked this drift. Discontented, probably apt men began in business competition, and hundreds repudiated co-operation and its stores mainly because of the pressure of counsel in their favor.

If ever there was a community who were advised again: the non-ge of debt is this. Early and late the warning voice was heard. Farmers were urged to economy and combination in the purchase of machinery. The masses were begged to live within their means. But with a perversity strange but patent, debt has increased in unrelenting ratio with the force or pressure exercised in the other—the opposite direction. Stores have been multiplied, credits extended, obligations increased, and personal expenditure has become so lavish that demoralization is almost universal, as if from sheer devilry and to show our independence—our ability to run our own affairs—we had run counter to those we sustain with uplifted hand in directions no more important than this. For even in religious things as in secular, some claim there is a rebound from the always present and always timely counsel of "Live your religion!" Those who assert this, point to the growing disregard for the Sabbath, to absence from meetings, to general neglect of duty, to the absorption in business, to the growth of speculation, to the increase of fashion in social life, to the decline in tithing, and as they assert, unmistakable loss of spirituality and reverence for authority. Now, persons of a certain temperament may lament the exhibition of all these phases of diversity and apparent instability of character. Reaction, perversity or resistance may be unexplainable to them. The philosophers may ask, however, whether this is not a more healthy and hopeful indication of progress than even unanimous action which comes of undue pressure of circumstances or authority. Surely that obedience which comes of intelligence, which springs from personal experience, and is the legitimate outgrowth of apprehended benefits, savors of advancement, tells that the restraints of childhood are being superseded by personal and spontaneous leading in the way of right, which is the highest and best condition.

Paul said: "When I was a child I spake as a child, I thought as a child, I understood as a child; but now that I am a man (or approaching thereto) I put away childish things." So that if we now as a community have resolved fully on encouraging and sustaining home industries, because of necessity, interest and unwavering assurance that this is the best for us and ours, we have advanced a mighty step. And if this is universal, our factories, foundries and all industrial organizations will feel the beneficent influence of this conclusion. If waiting for this we have concluded in the interval to stand by our friends, to prefer them, to give them support and encouragement, there is moral growth and force in this, and confidence will not only return, but abide with us and increase for ever and ever!

If after passing through the narrows of financial embarrassment, whether consequent on thoughtlessness or speculation; if we have felt the abhorrent incubus of debt, or inability to meet our engagements; if our personal respect or private friendship has been touched or wounded; if from bitter experience old counsel has been accepted as better than gold,—economy, caution, resolve, may be to us financial salvation all our days. If anxiety in regard to worldly affairs has exercised undue influence upon us, and religious duty has been secondary; if the glow of its fires and the love of its principles have waned in our hearts; if neglect has supervened upon our hitherto devotion; if in any or all of these things we have thought that counsel was incompatible with our freedom and an infringement upon our manhood and independence, until providential circumstances and reflection have convinced us of error,—it is but saying that we are wiser today than yesterday, and good authority has asserted that there is "more joy over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine that never went astray."

Mormon human nature is essentially progressive. Its basic spirit seeks for this. But we have needed many a rude awakening, many a severe blow, many a hard lesson, many a sad experience. Its believers have expected, claimed, to be "tried in all things," which includes vastly more than our poor thoughts have indicated in this column. But manhood is becoming broader; truth is becoming sweeter, duty is less irksome, and responsibility better understood; and all life, all occupation, all experience, but rubs off the enfoldments of childhood, ignorance, weakness, tradition, and early education; it but delivers us from the feeling of restraint, of compulsion, nay of duty, for we emerge into eternal right through the love thereof, and all our inspiration is begotten from above!

IF THE application of John Jacob Astor, made one hundred and two years ago, for a grant of 1,200 acres of land in the province of Quebec, had not been unfavorably acted upon, the chances are that the wealth and prestige of that great financial house would have been lost to New York. It is interesting to think of the difference this might have made in the Four Hundred and in other Gothamite things.