

RACE AND CIVILISATION

By I. HARRIS, M.D.

NOTE

The structure of society and the state are here examined from the scientific standpoint through a review of history. This scrutiny of humanity within the state brings under one focus its evolution, and such elucidation offers scientific guidance to some of the more perplexing problems of the day. In particular the author formulates two laws of human progress, the one concerned with the social structure of the state, the other giving the relation between nations.

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I. HARRIS
M.D.

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PREFACE

THIS volume was written soon after the end of the Great War and an introductory part of the work was published under the title of *Immortality* (Williams and Norgate). Since then a great deal has happened. 1939 seems to be a more auspicious year for marketing a book of this type than 1921 was.

A critic to whom the manuscript was submitted for an impartial opinion, after reporting that the volume is full of sagacious reflections and suggestive ideas drawn from many fields of research, states that "the manuscript will appeal to a rare type of reader. It makes no concession to popular prejudice." I am sure, however, that, in spite of the fact that this book makes no concession to popular prejudice, the two propositions postulated in it are acceptable to the great majority of the people of this country. They are (1) to place the British Empire in an impregnable position against all comers; (2) Economic security for everyone.

England is drifting towards Niagara Falls. Only a radical change in economic structure and outlook on life can avert an overwhelming catastrophe.

37, Rodney Street,
Liverpool.

I. H.

INTRODUCTION

It is impossible to deal with any problem appertaining to human society without reference to first principles. Without the latter life becomes meaningless and we lack all measure by which to appraise social values. Man is part and parcel of universal existence: his destiny is interwoven with the living universe; he is shaped by universal forces, and he is here to execute cosmic designs the import of which is hidden from him. The meaning of human deeds can only be found in the meaning of the universe as a whole. We do not know the meaning of life; we cannot tell which form of conduct is right or wrong. But cosmic designs manifest themselves in laws of nature, including those of human society. Scientific knowledge is a divine revelation beyond which it is impossible to go. In all our thoughts and actions we must be guided by a compass which points to the source of all life. This compass is, so far as human society is concerned, the biological laws.

The main task of this book is an exposition of two elementary laws of biology. (1) a nation within progresses increasingly towards closer co-operation between its members. (2) the relations between nations are governed by laws of natural selection.

A nation within progresses increasingly towards closer co-operation between its members. I will give some reasons here, and more will be found in the text why the present economic system has become untenable.

INTRODUCTION

1. As a heart specialist and researcher in high blood pressure, and lately as a director of the Institute for the Prevention of Disease affecting normal middle-class people, I have been struck most forcibly by the havoc which competitive capitalism has wrought on the physical being of the community. Degeneration of the heart, brain, blood-vessels, hardening of the arteries, are illnesses largely the result of the modern conditions of living. Competitive capitalism is a vital factor in diseases which kill and maim the majority of men from 40 years onwards. It is clear that the human machinery, flesh and blood, is unable to withstand the strain of competitive capitalism and the latter destroys the very class it is supposed to serve. I am sure the number of premature deaths owing to the present economic system is much larger than that of those who go under in the battlefield. (See my book *Diet and High Blood Pressure*—Hogarth Press.) Surely the criterion of a particular economic system is whether it permits the individual to lead a healthy normal life. Any system which does this is sound: any system which falls short of this standard must be rejected.

2. The most vital problem of our times, however, the solution of which brooks no delay, is that connected with population. As is well known, the time is fast approaching when the birth-rate in this country will be below the mortality rate; and, what is infinitely more serious, the quality of the population is deteriorating owing to the rapid disappearance of the middle classes. It is largely the economic factor which compels members of the middle class to commit race suicide. It is strange that the very people whose task it was to preserve the present order have done their best to undermine its foundation. Super tax, and particularly succession duties, have interfered with private enterprise and, more seriously,

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they have exercised a most pernicious influence on the biology of the population. It is not generally realised that in the breaking up of a big estate, a big business, a superior human strain, selected, segregated, preserved, is permanently lost to the nation. The position of a member of the middle classes has become impossible. He has to bear the bulk of the burden of defence and the cost of social legislation. A Socialistic state would not extract a heavier contribution from him, but in return, at present, the state does nothing at all for him. He must carry on or go under. I doubt whether the bitterest enemy of this country has ever inflicted so much harm on it as the government which is responsible for this type of taxation. It is destroying the basis on which the selection and preservation of the best-endowed human groups rest, and it is doing nothing to put something else in its place. Population cannot be improvised in a short time and favoured human strains take centuries to evolve. An empire cannot survive without an imperial race. The problem of population must remain unsolved as long as the present economic structure is retained.

3. What makes the present economic order so impossible is the fact that the laws governing competitive capitalism have not been allowed to operate without interference. I have already dealt with taxation. Unemployment is another example of this kind. Without unemployment benefit certain economic laws would have become operative. Wages would have had to become lower, commodities cheaper. In such circumstances demand would rise more towards the level of capacity of supply. Other factors, such as emigration, would have become operative. But the safety valve has been prevented from acting by the dole. The unemployment grant must result in an increase in cost of production, because industry

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has to provide the funds for the benefit. A vicious circle is thus established. The greater the number of unemployed, the greater the cost of production, the latter resulting in a greater increase in the number of unemployed. Sooner or later the burden which private enterprise can carry will reach the limit and the whole economic structure will come toppling down with a crash. If the competitive capitalistic system is to prevail it is fatal to interfere with the rules governing the system. An economic system based on capitalism cannot possibly be reconciled with Socialistic legislation. We must either have relentless competition or something quite different must take its place. Incidentally the figures of unemployment demonstrate clearly that the out-of-date economic system is totally inadequate to grapple with modern problems. Although we have almost two million unemployed it was difficult to find labour for rearming, and there are large tracts in the empire remaining undeveloped for want of man-power. The unemployment problem too must remain insoluble under the present economic system.

4. The real reason why the old economic order has become impossible is a biological one. A nation is an individuality with definite laws of growth like a tree, a flower. At each stage of development, if not prematurely decayed, it unfolds certain characteristic structures in the same way as a plant exhibits certain successive stages of growth—foliage, buds, blossoms, flowers. Now the political structure of European nations has developed from the feudal system into central government. It is not generally realised that politically this country is really a kind of communistic society. Equal political rights for everyone, with officers of state deliberately elected. Now the development of the economic structure of society must closely follow the political. The present economic

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structure is still at its feudal stage of development, but forces are already in being—I have enumerated a few—which must transform the feudal economy into a central agency embracing the whole nation. The fact is that at a certain stage of national development the economic structure must follow on the same lines as that of the political, or the nation is doomed. Collectivism is not an alternative system to competitive capitalism—it is the only system possible when a nation has reached an advanced stage of development. The type of collectivism I have in mind is not Communism; in fact there are important biological reasons for the retention and even for the further development of the class system, although this system will no longer be based on capitalism. The matter is as follows: the political structure of society developed from the feudal stage into a central government by Parliament. The economic structure is still in the feudal stage of development. Despotism in the long run has never proved itself an efficient form of government. Parliament has not failed, but feudal economy is inadequate to supply the needs of modern times in the same way as the armies of the feudal lords would not be a match for a national army. What is needed is for feudal economy to follow the same line of development as the political towards national unity. It is my conviction that England is at the cross-roads, and unless it can replace the present worn out economic system by effective collectivism it is doomed.

The second law is as follows: the relation between nations is governed by natural selection. War is as old as man, but natural selection does not operate in the same way in human society as in animal species. A particular animal breed survives because members belonging to this race are endowed with the quality of superior fitness.

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The individual survives as such because of his superior endowment, while, on the other hand, in man it is the corporate body, the nation, which has to endure the rigour of natural selection. We may be quite sure that the races of man have not altered at all so far as innate characteristics are concerned for the last five thousand years. Yet what a panorama of peoples and civilisations who have appeared and disappeared in this period! Humanity as a whole has doubtless during this time made progress in a well-defined direction.

Let us take a concrete example. Nine hundred years ago there were a good many people in the world, as numerous as those who were the ancestors of the present inhabitants of this country. But some of the contemporaries of the Anglo-Saxons of nine hundred years ago have disappeared, others have made but little progress since. This is a cosmic fact of tremendous import. Literally it means that the Anglo-Saxon stock has been chosen from a large number of people to occupy a predominant position for a considerable period in human history. We may take it that the present position of the Anglo-Saxon people in the world has been conditioned and given by the general growth of humanity, and that it is in the interests of humanity as a whole—the present and the future—that this people shall prevail and not the Hottentots. Such a phenomenon is an expression of cosmic processes in the same way as those which determine the evolution of a solar system. Without the active operation of natural selection in the form of war mankind would never have attained its present position. War has been an instrument for carrying out cosmic designs. It selects people and races whose natural proclivities are in harmony with the spirit of the age and puts them on a pedestal, thrusting others into oblivion.

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Could another agency such as the League of Nations effectively replace war as a regulator of human progress? Would such an agency do away with any nation that has outlived its usefulness, or would it preserve it? Which stock is to people the sparsely populated regions? Human progress is only possible by new nations with new qualities constantly appearing and replacing worn out states. To be able to say which nation should become dominant at a particular period it would be necessary to know the goal to which all humanity tends. Alas! we do not know it. I am sure had there been a league of nations in Egypt in the time when the Pharaohs were at their zenith Egyptian civilisation would still prevail. If the League of Nations had been instituted when Spain was predominant in Europe that country would still have remained predominant. Without natural selection, without war, human society would not have existed. The striving after national aggrandisement and imperialism is the most sacred cause in the world, and war is an agency by which cosmic purpose realises itself.

Let us examine recent events in the light of the principle just enunciated. After the war a number of small nations were created who were not strong enough to maintain themselves without outside help. The natural tendency is for smaller units of society to grow into larger ones. This process was reversed. Now a war or a series of wars will have to be fought out in order to rectify the mistakes of the visionaries responsible for this arrangement. For the gospel of self-determination is an illusion. Had this principle been acted on when England consisted of four or five little states the mighty British Empire could never have existed. The smaller units must come within the orbit of attraction of the greater. The individual is part of a whole. The position he has to occupy is given by

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universal existence. If these small nations do not voluntarily agree to form themselves into larger units they will be absorbed by their more powerful neighbours. There is no reason at all why a small nationality which is unable to stand on its own legs should be kept artificially alive.

Again the law that to the victor belongs the spoil is older than man. There is nothing wrong with this principle. But the gentlemen who arranged the Treaty of Versailles lacked the strength of character to give certain transactions their proper designation, with the result that conquered colonies became mandated territories. If conquest had not constituted valid title-deeds for territorial possession, then how many nations could claim rightful ownership of their countries? The mandatory territories ought to become British colonies.

But the most urgent problem at the moment requiring solution will be found nearer home. Sooner or later this country must be involved in a struggle for its very existence. It is foolish to talk of appeasement. We might as well endeavour to make the force of gravitation inoperative by a chant of soft words. We are up against primordial forces.

For generations this country clung tenaciously to a principle governing its foreign policy of opposing with all its might any power which sought domination in Europe; and now, when the need for such action is greater than ever, the feeble grasp and blurred vision of an old man is loosening for England its hold on a policy which has proved its life preserver through bygone ages.

But more than this, history teaches us that it is not the decadence of the individual member of the state which brings down a nation. It is a defective, usually worn out organisation which brings about the fall of empires.

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Sooner or later under normal growth a stage is reached in the affairs of a nation which must either lead to a revolutionary change in its structure—a rebirth or a catastrophe. We are witnessing at present the agony of dissolution of a society based on economic feudalism. At the same time we are in the throes of labour pain which heralds the dawn of a new economic age. This country is in for a testing time more severe than ever before in its history. Woe to a nation which cannot adapt itself to the requirements of a new age! In this hour of trial, when the fate of the British Empire is trembling in the balance, I plead most earnestly that party loyalty should give place to the greater loyalty towards the state. A new organisation embracing the whole nation should be created, the sole purpose of which should be the setting in motion of economic machinery of maximum efficiency. Such machinery would be of utility both for purposes of peace and war.

I am quite sure that as long as the present economic structure is retained in this country the gap in the pace of rearmament between it and its potential enemies will increase in favour of the latter. A radical overhaul of the economic system is overdue, apart from the question of war. It is time too that the tug-of-war which goes on between classes and individuals within the state, which represents so much wasted effort, should cease. The proper sphere for a policy of appeasement is within the country and the empire.

We must create conditions, even if it means lowering the standard of living for some sections of the population and increasing the hours of work, which will allow us to compete on more equitable terms in foreign markets; and a population which cannot be absorbed in industry in this country should be transferred to British possessions overseas.

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If all the resources of the British Empire were fully mobilised the position of this country would be impregnable against all comers. An imperial Parliament and an imperial prime minister, and ministers of foreign affairs and defence, ought to be an ideal to strive after.

I should like to conclude as I began. According to Weissmann, death came into the world as an adaptation in the interest of the progress of the species. We are the playthings of universal forces the behests of which have to be obeyed. To appraise rightly cosmic agencies such as war, imperialism, etc., we must divest ourselves of all sensation and all feeling; we must view the problems from behind and beyond happiness, pity or sympathy with human suffering. We are face to face with cosmic forces, the warp and woof which weaves eternal existence.