

Comment by the Editor

PROCESSES OF PEACE

The scheme of nature seems to be founded on strife. Forces of good and evil, of advancement and decline are ever at work. Creation and disintegration proceed simultaneously, and the one is simply antecedent to the other — complementary parts of the same process. Death treads on the heels of life. Yet destruction may contribute to ultimate progress. Old houses, once useful and elegant, are torn down to make room for more valuable buildings. New governments arise out of the ruins of decadent dynasties. The earth is constantly at odds with the air and water. Wind, rain, and streams tear down the hills and carry the soil away to the ocean; but eventually, by this very process, the land will emerge triumphant from the sea.

Finality is abhorrent to nature. Time and space are without end and life itself, though expressed in innumerable cycles, goes on through endless generations. Creatures come into being, pass on their heritage of life, and return to the clay from whence they sprang. The sparrow dies, but his life flows on forever in his countless progeny. Seasons come and go in their yearly cycle; the tide follows the moon

around the world; vapor returns to the earth as rain; and day succeeds night — all in regular sequence, perpetually.

Thus progress runs in cycles like the seasons. In the eternal quest for solutions we are forever travelling in circles, not always spiral or concentric, so that the course of progress becomes a maze of endless digressions. History repeats itself indeed: the experiences of the race occur in series. Peace follows war; prosperity and hard times alternate; and governments rise and fall in the Aristotelian order.

New species develop from the accumulation of chance variations transmitted from parents to offspring, but there are many reversions to type in the tedious process. Through millions of canine lives the wolf became a shepherd dog. Even in the realm of conscious human endeavor achievement is seldom direct or sudden. It is a far cry from the signal fire to the radio and a devious route from ox cart to airplane, with many false starts and returns in the process. Telegraphic recording instruments, once displaced by sounders, have now come into use again. As river packets and wagon trains gave way to the railroads, so now the railroads must stand aside for motor traffic on the highways and barges on the water. The end of one era is only the beginning of another, whether in commerce or science or art, for nothing is ever so utterly finished that no further progress is possible. Nevertheless this constant groping for improvement through incessant

trials and numerous errors promotes the civilization of the world. Railroads, rivers, and highways all have their place in the system of transportation but the kind of service they render has changed.

THE ELEMENT OF SPEED

Civilization, which is the cumulation of human progress, seems to have become lately a matter of diminishing space and saving time. Speed is the criterion of the age. Not how well a task is done but how quickly is the basis of praise or blame. Children in school must first of all think rapidly: accuracy and thorough consideration are secondary. In defiance of the old adage that haste makes waste, every one seems to be in a hurry. In accordance with the prevalent mood, literary style has changed from the leisurely grace of Victorian novelists to the sharp staccato of a motor epoch. Writers present their rambling thoughts in scraps of sentences. People even play intensely, as though the principal object were to finish the game. Bridge players have no time for conversation and golfers are too intent upon reaching the next green to notice the fresh air or the charming vistas. Only the hills and the birds seem to remain calm and serene.

In commercial relations also progress is measured in terms of speed. Distance has lost its meaning. Less than seventy-five years ago a trip from New York to Oregon would probably have consumed a year or more, while now men fly from coast to coast

in less than a day and a half. The official report of the discovery of gold in California, sent on April 1st by a special messenger to Washington, did not arrive until the middle of September; but fifteen years later, thanks to the telegraph, the capture of Vicksburg was known in San Francisco as soon as it was in Boston.

The remarkable conquest of time and space has unified the world, so that the people at the ends of the earth are neighbors. Next to the printing press, the telegraph as a means for the dissemination of news, has contributed most to the general enlightenment of man. Proximity and common knowledge form a basis for better understanding among the nations.

And it seems significant that two of the pioneers in the development of telegraphy in America became founders of institutions for learning. Creighton University was the culmination of the lifelong desire of Edward Creighton to contribute to the means of education, while Ezra Cornell established Cornell University as a school where "any person can find instruction in any study."

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