

BIOLOGY-SOCIOLOGY

War—The Destroyer of Mankind

"A Classic of Science"

**"The Survival of the Unfittest is the Primal Cause of
The Downfall of Nations. Like the Seed is the Harvest"**

THE HUMAN HARVEST. By David Starr Jordan, in Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, Vol. XLV., April 18, 1906, Philadelphia.

SCIENCE is wisdom set in order. It is known as science by its orderly arrangement, but above and beyond all matters of arrangement the wisdom itself must take rank. Wisdom is the essence of human experience, the contact of mind with the order of nature. Of all men of his time, Benjamin Franklin was preëminently a man of wisdom. By the same token the first leader in science in America, he still takes rank with the greatest. . . .

Benjamin Franklin once said, "All war is bad; some wars worse than others." Then, once again, in more explicit terms, referring to the dark shadow of war cast over scenes of peace, the evil of the standing army, Franklin said to Baynes:

"If one power singly were to reduce its standing army it would be instantly overrun by other nations. Yet I think there is one effect of a standing army which must in time be felt so as to bring about the abolition of the system. A standing army not only diminishes the population of a country, but even the size and breed of the human species. For an army is the flower of the nation. All the most vigorous, stout, and well-made men in a kingdom are to be found in the army, and these men in general cannot marry."

What is true of standing armies is far more true of armies that fight and fall; for as Franklin said again, "Wars are not paid for in war times: the bill comes later." . . .

Once there was a great king—and the nation over which he bore rule lay on the flanks of a mountain range, spreading across fair hills and valleys green and fertile across to the Mediterranean Sea. And the men of his race, fair and strong, self-reliant and self-confident, men of courage and men of action, were men "who knew no want they could not

fill for themselves." They knew none on whom they looked down, and none to whom they regarded themselves as inferior. And for all things which men could accomplish, these plowmen of the Tiber and the Apennines felt themselves fully competent and adequate. "Vir", they called themselves in their own tongue, and *virile*, virilis, men like them are called to this day. It was the weakling and the slave who was crowded to the wall; the man of courage begat descendants. In each generation and from generation to generation the human harvest was good. And the great wise king who rules them; but here my story halts—for there was no king. There could be none. For it was written, men fit to be called men, men who are *Vires*, "are too self-willed, too independent, and too self-centred to be ruled by anybody but themselves." Kings are for weaklings, not for men. Men free-born control their own destinies. "The fault is not in our stars, but in ourselves that we are underlings." For it was later said of these same days: "there was a Brutus once, who would have brooked the Eternal Devil to take his seat in Rome, as easily as a king." And so there was no king to cherish and control these men his subjects. The spirit of freedom was the only ruler they knew, and this spirit being herself metaphoric called to her aid the four great genii which create and recreate nations. Variation was ever at work, while heredity held fast all that she developed. Segregation in her mountain fastnesses held the world away, and selection chose the best and for the best purposes, casting aside the weakly, and the slave, holding the man for the man's work, and ever the man's work was at home, building the cities, subduing the forests, draining the marshes, adjusting customs and statutes, preparing for the new generations. So the men begat sons of men after their own fashion, and the men of strength and courage were ever dominant. The Spirit of Freedom is a wise master, cares wisely for all that he controls.

So in the early days, when Romans were men, when Rome was small, without glory, without riches, without colonies and without slaves, these were the days of Roman greatness.

Then the Spirit of Freedom little by little gave way to the Spirit of Domination. Conscious of power, men sought to exercise it, not on themselves but on one another. Little by little, this meant banding together, aggression, suppression, plunder, struggle, glory, and all that goes with the pomp and circumstances of war. The individuality of men was lost in the aggrandizement of the few. Independence was swallowed up in ambition, patriotism came to have a new meaning. It was transferred from the hearth and home to the trail of the army.

It does not matter to us now what were the details of the subsequent history of Rome. We have now to consider only a single factor. In science, this factor is known as "reversal of selection". "Send forth the best ye breed!" That was the word of the Roman war-call. And the spirit of Domination took these words literally, and the best were sent forth. In the conquests of Rome, *Vir*, the real man, went forth to battle and to the work of foreign invasion, *Homo*, the human being, remained in the farm and the workshop and begat the new generations. Thus "Vir gave place to Homo." The sons of real men gave place to the sons of scullions, stable-boys, slaves, camp-followers, and the riff-raff of those the great victorious army does not want.

The fall of Rome was not due to luxury, effeminacy, corruption, the wickedness of Nero and Caligula, the weakness of the train of Constantine's worth-

An Elegant Vase

topped by an ornamental
brass flame, was the original

FRANKLIN STOVE

It will be described as
NEXT WEEK'S CLASSIC INVENTION

less descendants. It was fixed at Philippi, when the spirit of domination was victorious over the spirit of freedom. It was fixed still earlier, in the rise of consuls and triumvirates and the fall of the simple sturdy self-sufficient race who would brook no arbitrary ruler. When the real men fell in war, or were left in faraway colonies, the life of Rome still went on. But it was a different type of Roman which continued it, and this new type repeated in Roman history its weakling parentage.

"It is puerile," says Charles Ferguson, "to suppose that kingdoms are made by kings. The king could do nothing if the mob did not throw up its cap when the king rides by. The king is consented to by the mob, because of that in him which is mob-like. The mob loves glory and prizes, so does the king. If he loved beauty and justice, the mob would shout for him while the fine words were sounding in the air, but he could never celebrate a jubilee or establish a dynasty. When the crowd gets ready to demand justice and beauty, it becomes a democracy and has done with kings." . . .

What have the historians to say to these matters? Very few have grasped the full significance of their own words, for very few have looked on men as organisms, and on nations as dependent on the specific character of the organisms destined for their reproduction.

So far as I know, Benjamin Franklin was the first to think of man thus as an inhabitant, a species in nature among other species and dependent on nature's forces as other animals and other inhabitants must be. . . .

"Vir Gave Place to Homo"

Thus "*Vir* gave place to *Homo*," real men to mere human beings. There were always men enough such as they were. "A hencoop will be filled, whatever the (original) number of hens," said Benjamin Franklin. And thus the mob filled Rome. No wonder "the little finger of Constantine was thicker than the loins of Augustus". No wonder that "if Tiberius chastised his subjects with whips, Valentinian chastised them with scorpions."

"Government having assumed god-head took at the same time the appurtenances of it. Officials multiplied. Subjects lost their rights. Abject fear paralyzed the people and those that ruled were intoxicated with insolence and cruelty." "The worst government is that which is most worshipped as divine." "The emperor possessed in the army an overwhelming force over

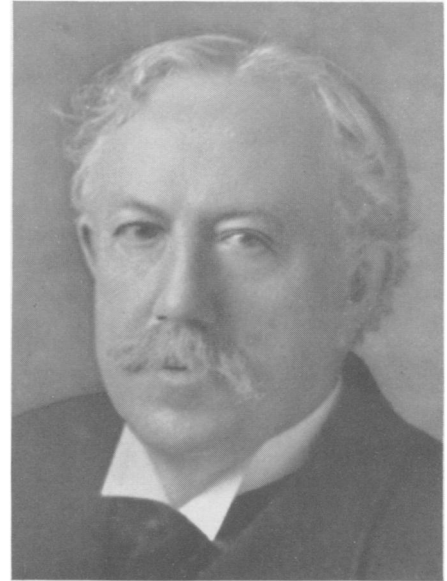
which citizens had no influence, which was totally deaf to reason or eloquence, which had no patriotism because it had no country, which had no humanity because it had no domestic ties." "There runs through Roman literature a brigand's and barbarian's contempt for honest industry." "Roman civilization was not a creative kind, it was military, that is destructive." What was the end of it all? The nation bred real men no more. To cultivate the Roman fields "whole tribes were borrowed." The man of the quick eye and the strong arm, gave place to the slave, the scullion, the pariah, the man with the hoe, the man whose lot does not change because in him lies no power to change it. "Slaves have wrongs, but freemen alone have rights." So at the end the Roman world yielded to the barbaric, because it was weaker in force. "The barbarians settled and peopled the country rather than conquered it." And the process is recorded in history as the fall of Rome.

"Out of every hundred thousand strong men, eighty thousand were slain. Out of every hundred thousand weaklings, ninety to ninety-five thousand were left to survive." This is Dr. Seeck's calculation, and the biological significance of such mathematics must be evident at once. Dr. Seeck speaks with scorn of the idea that Rome fell from the decay of old age, from the corruption of luxury, from neglect of military tactics or from the over-diffusion of culture."

"It is inconceivable that the mass of Romans suffered from over-culture." "In condemning the sinful luxury of wealthy Romans, we forget that the trade-lords of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were scarcely inferior in this regard to Lucullus and Apicius, their waste and luxury not constituting the slightest check to the advance of the nations to which these men belonged. The people who lived in luxury in Rome were scattered more thinly than in any modern state of Europe. The masses lived at all times more poorly and frugally because they could do nothing else. Can we conceive that a war force of untold millions of people is rendered effeminate by the luxury of a few hundreds?"

"Too long have historians looked on the rich and noble as marking the fate of the world. Half the Roman Empire was made up of rough barbarians untouched by Greek or Roman culture."

Does history ever repeat itself? It always does if it is true history. If it does not we are dealing not with history but with mere succession of incidents.



DAVID STARR JORDAN

about the time he made a world tour in behalf of peace. Dr. Jordan, who died September 19, at the age of 80, had lived to see another generation sacrificed to war.

Like causes produce like effects, just as often as man may choose to test them. Whenever men use a nation for the test, poor seed yields a poor fruition. Where the weakling and the coward survives in human history, there "the human harvest is bad," and it can never be otherwise. . . .

It is related that Guizot once asked this question of James Russell Lowell, "How long will the republic endure?" "So long as the ideas of its founders remain dominant," was the answer. But again we have this question: "How long will the ideas of its founders remain dominant?" Just so long as the blood of the founders remains dominant in the blood of its people. Not necessarily the blood of the Puritans and the Virginians alone, the original creators of the land of free states. We must not read our history so narrowly as that. It is the blood of freeborn men, be they Roman, Frank, Saxon, Norman, Dane, Goth or Samurai. It is a free stock which creates a free nation. Our republic shall endure so long as the human harvest is good, so long as the movement of history, the progress of peace and industry leaves for the future not the worst but the best of each generation. The Republic of Rome lasted so long as there were Romans, the Republic of America will last so long as its people, in blood and spirit, remain what we have learned to call Americans.