

Professor Lombroso On The Boers

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and the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL, opportunities of discussing the social and political questions affecting the profession and so, by gathering up, comparing, and harmonising the opinions of many men of various experiences, rendering it possible to go to the public and to the Legislature with a settled policy.

"I hold every man," said Lord Bacon, "a debtor to his profession," and no member of the profession has the right to say that he takes no interest in what are called "medical politics," by which we understand the maintenance of the honour and of the interests of the medical profession and the consolidation and extension of its influence on public opinion, and on the course of legislation in matters touching the public health and the scientific and social interests of the profession itself. The real source of many of the disadvantages under which the medical profession in this country still labours is traceable to the apathy of many of its members, who cannot be roused to take a share in the determination of matters which lie a little outside the absorbing calls of actual practice or of clinical work. The numerical strength of the Association is great, but it ought to be still greater. Its Branches are doing a great work in bringing men together, and in affording opportunities for conference and discussion, but they might be still more useful in these respects if members would take more interest in their meetings and attend them more regularly. Modifications in the arrangements for these meetings and in the organisation of the larger Branches have been made from time to time, and others may be found desirable. If so they can be made without difficulty, for it should always be remembered that the Association is still a growing organism. For many years past it has grown steadily in numbers and in adaptability to the needs of members, and it will, we believe, go on growing in both respects. Justification for this hope is found in its past history, and we may well look forward with confidence to the future. May we not then, fairly appeal to those who are still outside its ranks to study the aims and methods of the British Medical Association, and to satisfy themselves whether they may not approve the one, and whether therefore they should not support, or perchance lend their aid to improve, the other?

PROFESSOR LOMBROSO ON THE BOERS.

FROM a study of certain writings of Professor Lombroso we had derived the impression that in his eyes the whole human race is more or less degenerate, or, at any rate, that in any given civilised country the members of the population presenting none of the signs which in his opinion indicate degeneracy are rare exceptions. We gather, however, from an article by him which appeared in a recent number of the *Nuova Antologia* that he has found one nation which fulfils his ideal of perfect manhood. To his mind the Boers are the coming race; even now they are the salt of the earth. We know that the Boers look upon themselves as the chosen people, and they will doubtless think highly of the judgment of the Turin Professor who shares that belief.

In the opening words of his article Professor Lombroso boasts that from the very beginning of the war he maintained that in spite of their enormous inferiority in num-

bers they would be victorious. This belief it appears was largely founded on the fact that they are fighting for a "just cause which attracts to them the sympathies of the whole world translated into men, money, and perfected arms." Then they are patriots, and therefore of much greater value than the English "mercenaries." Apparently the foreigners who represent a part of the translated sympathies aforesaid fight for sentiment! Other points in the Boers' favour are that they can live on "bilitony" (*sic*), and that they are habituated to a climate fatal to Europeans. "Bilitony" is an instance of the deformations of foreign words and names with which readers of Professor Lombroso are painfully familiar, and the remarkable statement about the South African climate gives a measure of his accuracy as to facts. The poet says, "Thrice is he armed that hath his quarrel just;" but Professor Lombroso puts the multiplying power of a just cause still higher, for he says it quadruples the number of the Boers. Among their other advantages we are told that they enjoy a Government exactly suited to their character—a statement which strikes us as a doubtful compliment, as the Krugerite oligarchy can hardly be regarded as a model of political virtue by anyone who knows what honest statecraft means. Professor Lombroso describes it as an "absolutely free Government;" but to those who have lived under it, the freedom of the Government has seemed to be exercised chiefly in administrative wrongdoing. He speaks of the Boers as a "meek" people, and, although he does not generally go to Holy Writ for support of his opinions, it may be on that ground that his prophetic soul leads him to foresee that they shall inherit the earth.

When midway through his article, the Professor appears suddenly to have awakened to the fact that the Boers have not been fulfilling his predictions of victory. But after all that is only a fact, and what is fact against so pretty a theory as he has framed about the glorious destinies of Mr. Kruger's burghers? Professor Lombroso's faith in the triumph of the Boers remains unshaken because "the power of liberty can conduct a chosen people like the Boers to victory even against forces forty times greater." We have already seen that the justice of their cause, combined with the sustaining properties of "bilitony," quadruples their fighting strength; now defeat, combined with Professor Lombroso's faith in liberty, is to make them forty times stronger. As he assures us that the said faith is indestructible, it becomes an interesting arithmetical problem to determine what higher multiple of four will represent the fighting strength of the Boers when they are finally crushed. So rooted is his belief in his conclusions, that he says that even if England after one or two years of warfare came out victorious, he would not change them. Whatever their losses may be, Professor Lombroso assures the world that the Boers are certain to win in the long run, because they carry out the biblical precept, "Increase and multiply," so successfully that they must ultimately form a nation which will "stagger humanity" by its valour and virtue. With characteristic incapacity to see things as they really are, Professor Lombroso takes no account of the effects of British rule, which, when the time of blood and iron is overpast, will transform the Boers into British subjects as loyal as the people of Canada.

The only defect he sees in his chosen race is an undue tenderness in the treatment of their conquered foes. This tenderness, we are given to understand, is not reciprocated by the brutal Briton. Here, again, we are inclined to agree with the professor, for we think that such exhibitions of amiable weakness as shooting British soldiers under the white flag should be dealt with by hanging rather than by protests.

Professor Lombroso foresees a dismal future for England, for victory, even if fortune favours her army, is sure to end in her ruin. Carried away by the reactionary force of Imperialism, she will prefer to industrial progress and to the increase of her trade the barbaric crown of military glory. She will bow the knee before her victorious warriors, who as soon as they set their conquering foot on their native shores will set themselves to upset the Constitution. These Cassandra-like vaticinations will move the British people to laughter rather than to alarm. May we remind Professor Lombroso that we have won battles and conquered nations before now, and none of these doleful consequences which he sees to be in store for us have come about? There is not, we venture to think, the slightest danger that Lord Roberts will go down to the House of Commons and order the Serjeant-at-Arms to take away the "bauble" which it is the privilege of that functionary to carry; and we doubt if even at the height of his present popularity General Baden-Powell would be permitted to seize Windsor Castle and proclaim himself king.

Rapt into future times the Italian seer beholds rising in a majestic vision before his mind's eye the United States of Africa. These are to divide the world with the United States of America, while the mouldering thrones and effete tyrannies and superstitions of degenerate Europe crumble into dust. He is indeed fain to admit that Mr. Kruger has sometimes shown an "ultra-conservative tendency," while Great Britain is a most important centre of civilisation and internal liberty. But, alas! she has in recent years forsaken the glorious traditions of Gladstone, and as a consequence entered upon a period of decadence, as Venice did before her. She finds it necessary to bind her colonies to her by the bonds of militarism, and for this reason Professor Lombroso cannot find it in his heart to bless her. Well, as was said of Italy by a famous countryman of his, Great Britain *farà da se*, a phrase which for our present purpose may be taken to mean that she will try to do without the blessing of Professor Lombroso.

THE THEORY OF IONS.

ONE meets with much reference to ions in modern chemical literature, and a few words about the so-called "Ionic Hypothesis" or the "Electrical Dissociation Theory" may therefore be of interest.

We all know that when an electric current passes through such a liquid as a solution of hydrochloric acid, the dissolved substance is decomposed into components (in this case hydrogen and chlorine) which are set free at two quite distinct points in the liquid—namely, the electrodes or places where the current enters and leaves the solution. Since the hydrogen and chlorine are not given off at the same place, it appears that one or both of these elements must have wandered through the liquid

from the place at which it was liberated to the electrode at which it is set free.

An element or group of elements in this wandering state divorced from the rest of the original molecule is called an "ion" from the Greek word meaning "going." Some elements or groups of elements, such as hydrogen, the metals, and ammonium, are always set free at the negative electrode, and these were called by Faraday "cat-ions" because they "go down" the positive current, while other elements or groups of elements, such as chlorine, oxygen, sulphurion (SO_4) and nitron (NO_3) always appear at the positive electrode, and were called by Faraday "an-ions" because they "go up" against the current.

If we assume the cat-ions to be all charged with positive electricity, their attraction by the negative electrode is explained, while at the same time the an-ions must be supposed to bear charges of negative electricity, which they discharge on the positive electrode. If we further assume that every atom of hydrogen, and the equivalent amount of every metal, bear exactly the same electrical charge, we can at once deduce Faraday's well-known electrolytic law that the quantity of the ions set free at the electrodes in an electrolyte depends solely on the amount of electricity that has passed through. In fact the ions are the carriers of the electric current, and each ion can only carry a fixed quantity of electricity.

The question that now arises is this: Are these ions free only while an electric current is passing through the liquid or do they exist in all liquids? The "ionic hypothesis" asserts that all liquids that are capable of being decomposed by electricity contain free ions, even when they are not being subjected to electric influence, and that the more dilute a solution the greater the percentage of dissociation of the dissolved substance into its constituent ions. The ions are seldom, if ever, capable of existing apart from oppositely charged ions. Thus the hydrogen ion is held to consist of one atom only, while free hydrogen consists of molecules each of which contains two atoms. Thus a solution of hydrogen and chlorine in water contains molecules of each of these elements, while a solution of hydrochloric acid contains atoms of each of the elements. Nascent hydrogen may perhaps contain hydrogen ions (or atoms) at the moment of liberation, but they quickly pair off into molecules.

There must always be an equal number of atoms of sodium and chlorine in a solution of sodium chloride in order that the positive charges of electricity on the sodium atoms may, when added together, be held bound by the negative charges on the chlorine atoms. If by any means the number of chlorine atoms be increased beyond this number, the extra chlorine atoms will combine in pairs, forming ordinary chlorine gas. Thus ionic dissociation does not alter the percentage composition of a salt.

Many of the ions are supposed to have a complicated structure, thus all the sulphates are assumed, in solution, to contain sulphurion (SO_4), which is not known in the free state, but when liberated at an electrode in presence of water immediately yields oxygen and sulphuric acid. In like manner all acetates are supposed to contain the highly complex ion "acetoxyl" ($\text{C}_2\text{H}_3\text{O}_2$), which of course is not known as an independent substance.

If the ionic hypothesis be true, then metallic salts in very