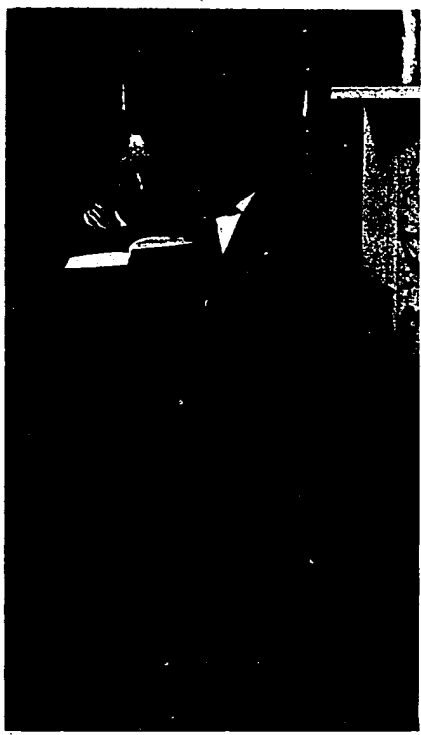


Is Mankind Advancing?*

THIS is a brief for the negative. Mrs. Martin regards the ancient Greek as the highest level ever reached by the human race, and in support of this thesis she cites numerous distinguished authors in praise of the Greeks, draws up comparative lists of the great men of different centuries, and contrasts the evils of our civilization with the merits of the Greek. Dr. J. J. Walsh is equally plausible when he calls "the thirteenth the greatest of centuries," and we should enjoy hearing a debate between Mrs. Martin and him.

There are two distinct questions in-

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MRS. JOHN MARTIN.

volved in this. One is whether there has been any improvement in native capacity and the other is whether there has been any improvement in the conditions of life. The first question is still an open one and perhaps can never be settled. Is there any man now living who is the superior of Aristotle in intellectual power, or is there any community of the same size which has as many men of genius as Athens had? Galton was the first to attempt a scientific solution of this question, and he is not altogether convincing, because of the difficulty of distinguishing priority from pre-eminence, and of making allowance for the progressive accumulation of prestige. How can we tell whether any one among the captains of our trans-Atlantic liners is a greater navigator than Columbus?

The other question of whether we have an advantage over the Greeks in science, art, literature, morals, religion, government, health and mode of life is

not so ambiguous, and Mrs. Martin, with all her ingenuity in argument and abundant citation of "proof-texts," is not able to make out a plausible case. It depends, of course, largely upon the point of view. As a Fabian Socialist, the author regards the modern wage system as worse than Greek slavery. As an advocate of the simple life she finds the primitive conditions of Greece superior to the complexities of ours. As an anti-suffragist, she is not horrified at the subordination of the Greek women. As an opponent of mysticism of every kind Christianity does not seem to her altogether an improvement.

Fortunately, this question is one that need not be argued about, for it is easily decided by experiment. Greece is still a sparsely settled country, and any persons who prefer may go there and live the old Greek life, discarding all our modern science and machinery, speaking the Greek language, and practising, so far as the laws of the land will allow, the old Greek morality. Nobody seems inclined to try it except Raymond Duncan, and he has given it up, preferring to live in New York, Chicago or Philadelphia.