Sociology: Practical and Theoretical.*

It seems almost superfluous to review Mr. Riis's "Battle with the Slum." A reviewer likes to think that if he has not discovered the merits or faults of the book he discusses, he has at least pointed them out to readers who knew nothing about them. Reviewing Mr. Riis, he feels a little like the individual who, having nothing more original to contribute, observes that "It is a fine day." It is a fine book, — but everybody knows that; and much

*The Battle with the Slum. By Jacob A. Riis. Illustrated. New York: The Macmillan Co.

Human Nature and the Social Order. By Charles Horton Cooley. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Our Benevolent Feudalism. By W. J. Ghent. New York: The Macmillan Co.

of it has already appeared elsewhere, and has become part of the make-up of the American mind. Mr. Riis does not propose to work alone. His cry is not, "See what a fine thing I am doing!" but "See what is being done, and can be done, and come and take a hand!" It is the democratic ideal, that everyone can help, from President Roosevelt, whose portrait appears opposite the title-page, to the ignorant immigrant who arrived yesterday. And for that matter, "our poor human nature is at least as robust on Avenue A as up on Fifth Avenue, if it has half a chance, and often enough with no chance at all" (p. 220). The human species is extremely variable, and the most progressive peoples exhibit most variation. Hence it happens that all men are not born equal; do not come into the world with the same endowments. Is this fact to be a stumbling-block to democracy? Not at all; it is the one thing which makes a genuine democracy possible. Because each one preserves his own individuality, stands for something more or less unique, it is possible to have a national architecture, as it were, in which no part is useless, no part independent of the rest. Each may attain a certain superiority; each may willingly acknowledge many kinds of inferiority; none may cease to strive upward. Mr. Riis does not claim to be a sociologist, but the logical outcome of his work is to enable every individual to take his proper place in the world's work, — indeed, in the world's play also. This, at all events, is the "inalienable right" of each member of a democracy, and the no less inalienable need of that democracy itself.

Two or three things are plain to every reader of "The Battle with the Slum." One is, that the people of the slums do not have anything like a fair chance; another, that they are capable of much improvement, given better conditions; a third, that it does not do to wait on philanthropy for justice. These things are generally known, in a vague way; but Mr. Riis makes them living realities. It is a favorite opinion of some people that the unfortunate and downtrodden are such because they are not capable of anything else. There is necessarily a certain element of truth in this; but from the time that the Israelites came out of Egypt, history has afforded instances enough of the regeneration or new birth of peoples who had been supposed incapable of anything noble. This country is the "promised land" of hordes of workers from over-sea, and we may believe with Mr. Riis that there are possibilities here of welding this miscellaneous and at first sight unpromising material into the structure of a great nation. This is not to be done, however, without strenuous effort, and the "battle" has been real enough. Mr. Riis thus speaks of the results, contrasting past with present:

"Human life then counted for less than the landlord's profits; to-day it is weighed in the scale against them. Property still has a powerful pull. 'Vested rights' rise up and confront you, and no matter how loudly you may protest that no man has a right to kill his neighbor, they are still there. No one will contradict you, but they won't yield — till you make them. In a hundred ways you are made to feel that vested rights are sacred, if human life is not. But the glory is that you *can* make them yield. You couldn't then."

It may be that Mr. Riis's style is rambling, and his sentences are occasionally obscure; it may be that he is not always quite fair to things he does not understand; but his book is a live book, full of human interest, and is the record of great things done. It will help to make things move, and that is what it was written for.

Mr. Cooley's "Human Nature and the Social Order" is in many ways a remarkable book. The present writer, as he read it, found much to admire; and yet the impression produced by the whole was unfavorable. Having said this, he feels that he owes some explanation, almost an apology. The argument throughout is closely reasoned, and it is hard to say exactly why it does not appear satisfactory. At the very beginning, the author boldly announces:

"A separate individual is an abstraction unknown to experience, and so likewise is society when regarded as something apart from individuals. The real thing is Human Life, which may be considered either in an individual aspect or a social, that is to say, general, aspect; but is always, as a matter of fact, both individual and general" (p. 1).

Again:

"The main thing here is to bring out the *vital* unity of every phase of personal life, from the simplest interchange of a friendly word to the polity of nations or of hierarchies. The common idea of the matter is crudely mechanical — that there are persons as there are bricks, and societies as there are walls. A person, or some trait of personality or of intercourse, is held to be the element of society, and the latter is formed by the aggregation of these elements. Now there is no such thing as an element of society in the sense that a brick is the element of a wall; this is a mechanical conception quite inapplicable to vital phenomena. I should say that living wholes have aspects but not elements" (p. 134).

As regards the self, it is by no means to be identified with the material body; it is rather a body of feeling, or ideas, which may be much

more closely identified with so-called external objects than with the parts of the individual's anatomy. Says Mr. Cooley:

"There is no view of the self, that will bear examination, which makes it altogether distinct, in our minds, from other persons. If it includes the whole mind, then of course, it includes all the persons we think of, all the society which lives in our thoughts. If we confine it to a certain part of our thought with which we connect a distinctive emotion or sentiment called self-feeling, as I prefer to do, it still includes the persons with whom we feel most identified. *Self and other do not exist as mutually exclusive social facts,* and phraseology which implies that they do, like the antithesis egoism versus altruism, is open to the objection of vagueness, if not of falsity" (pp. 91–92).

Each individual constructs a self-platform, the planks of which must fit together more or less harmoniously; and the sense of wrong is felt when anything is added which is inharmonious. Thus, if a man regards himself as honest, he dislikes to do a dishonest thing, because it breaks into and injures the self-idea. This self-platform, necessarily based largely on impressions received from others, is always related to the society in which we move, and no one can think of himself except in relation to others. Even when the individual is isolated, physically and socially, he tends to create a mental society of ideal beings with whom he seems to hold intercourse.

The present writer would be the last to deny the intimate connection between the individuals of any society of living beings; indeed, when one regards the complex social organization of such animals as the Zoöphytes, it becomes difficult to say exactly what are the limits of personality in a physical sense. Or again, is a tree a single individual or a multitude of individuals? — the answer is not so simple as it looks. Yet, nevertheless, *he is quite positive that he is a distinct entity,* much more distinct than a brick in a wall. When Mr. Cooley says that such a proposition will not bear examination, he means simply that no objective proof can be found for it; which, of course, is in the nature of the case. He may fairly urge, however, that my subjective consciousness recognizes only myself, and thus includes therein the universe, so far as it is known to me. If the universe is myself, therefore I am the universe, and not a distinct and separate thing at all. — Q. E. D. To this it must be replied that a point exists in space, and by virtue of space, and yet is a thing of itself. If only one point existed, it would be identical with all space; but we cannot conceive of space that is not extended, that is, many-pointed. So I affirm my totally distinct being, because I feel absolutely certain that there are other such beings, other points in the spiritual universe. Thus out of the fact of "other" comes the fact of "self," not as an "aspect" but as a veritable "element." To fully discuss Mr. Cooley's book is impossible in a short review. It is full of interesting ideas, but we could wish that it were less wordy and more illuminated by concrete examples.

Mr. W. J. Ghent, in "Our Benevolent Feudalism," presents us with a picture of modern society which recalls the occasions when one has seen one's reflection in a door-knob. The reflection was grotesque in the extreme, but unmistakably represented one's physiognomy. Mr. Ghent writes in a lucid and interesting manner, and arrives, in general, at these conclusions:

"What, then, in this republic of the United States, may Socialist, Individualist, and Conservative see alike, if only they will look with unclouded vision? In brief, an irresistible movement — now almost at its culmination — toward great combinations in specific trades; next toward coalescence of kindred industries, and thus toward the complete integration of capital. Consequent upon these changes, the group of captains and lieutenants of industry attains a daily increasing power, social, industrial and political, and becomes the ranking order in a vast series of gradations. The state becomes stronger in its relation to the propertyless citizen, weaker in its relation to the man of capital. A growing subordination of classes, and a tremendous increase in the numbers of the lower orders, follow. . . . In a word, they who desire to live — whether farmers, workmen, middlemen, teachers, or ministers — must make their peace with those who have the disposition of the livings. The result is a renascent Feudalism, which, though it differs in many forms from that of the time of Edward I., is yet based upon the same status of lord, agent and underling. It is a Feudalism somewhat graced by a sense of ethics and somewhat restrained by a fear of democracy."

I sometimes have said that I am a socialist, and yet believe in the divine right of kings. I do not believe that a perfectly organized democratic society will be without leaders; on the contrary, it will assiduously search out those who excel in any particular, and make full use of their talents. As a matter of fact, the commonwealth of science is to-day organized on a perfectly international and democratic basis; everyone who cares may have his say, and leadership exists at the same time, without compulsion. Authority is recognized too much rather than too little. I do not think, therefore, that we have any reason for identifying mastership with tyranny; the one is natural and desirable, the other an abomination.

At the same time, of course Mr. Ghent is right in pointing out the vast amount of unnatural mastership or tyranny which exists in modern society. As a means of stirring people up to appreciate the real dangers of the situation, the book will do excellent service. The situation, as it seems to me, is this: Industry is rapidly becoming organized on a coöperative basis, so far as production is concerned, and the time is at hand when the people must choose whether to be slaves or free. If the people are not fit to participate in an industrial democracy, they cannot, though all the capitalists should be drowned in the sea. Whenever and in such degree as they are fit, the country and the fulness thereof is theirs.

It may justly be urged that as a matter of fact the people have not the chance to become fit. It is conceivable, of course, that they might be hindered in this to such a degree that no genuinely democratic government would ever become possible; but this I cannot believe. At the same time, it is impossible to exaggerate the need for help in this matter, help which must largely take the form of education, of one sort or another. It is just for this reason that such men as Mr. Riis are so invaluable. The problem is in a way a psychological one. The existing unfitness is mental rather than physical. As I see it, one of the greatest difficulties in the way is the intense desire of the people to get something for nothing: to receive the unearned increment. It would seem as if they looked forward to the time, predicted by some facetious fellow, when all would live on the interest of accumulated capital!

T. D. A. Cockerell.