

ARTICLE IV.

THE JEWS AND RACE SURVIVAL.

BY EDWARD M. MERRINS, M.D., WUCHANG, CHINA.

I.

I. THE PASSING OF THE NATIONS.

"All of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed."—*Jewish Psalm.*

Is it true that the opening and closing years of a century are more eventful than the intervening years, as if whole nations at these arresting divisions of time became restless and inclined to new courses, just as many individuals are at the close of each year? Certainly the opening years of the twentieth century are being marked by profound political and social changes in almost every country. What the ultimate issue will be, no one dares say. Perhaps the world is in the birth throes of a new civilization. Those who profess to be able to discern the signs of the times, see in the renaissance of the great Oriental nations much that threatens the dominance, if not the very existence, of Western civilization. It will surely be tested very severely in the long and desperate struggle in one form or another between the East and the West, which is even now beginning.

At this critical period, we are informed that Western civilization, instead of being at its best and strongest, is showing startling signs of decay. In some directions progress has already been arrested, in others there is actual retrogression. If this is indeed the case, it ought not to cause sur-

prise. A survey of history gives no assurance of the permanence of any civilization, nor of the uninterrupted and continuous advance of any race or nation. After an intense and progressive life for several centuries, each of the great nations of the past has declined and passed into a state of slumber or death. Empires that were the mightiest in their time have vanished so completely that were it not for the good fortune of their historical records having been written on clay tablets, which were marvelously preserved by the desert sands, we should hardly know they had ever existed. Why should modern nations be exempt from the fate which has overtaken all the nations of the past? There is some ground, therefore, for the gloomy forebodings now so common, not only in present facts, but also because it seems to be a universal law that after a period of strength and prosperity each nation must decline and pass away.

But men of patriotic spirit refuse to submit without a struggle to the verdict of the politicians, historians, and eugenists, who pronounce the doom of their nation. They contend that if the handwriting on the wall is indeed visible, at any rate the final word has not appeared, and it may be that what has been written is not ineffaceable. As compared with the ancients we are better able, it is said, to determine the national fate. Our scientific knowledge and resources are now so great that if decay has begun it should be possible not only to arrest it, but also to remedy the harm that has been done, and prevent its recurrence. In brief, there is no good reason why the life and greatness of a nation should not be prolonged indefinitely. Consequently, searching inquiry is being made into the causes of national decadence, so that the new science of eugenics has been created,

i.e. the study of all agencies under social control that may either improve or impair the racial qualities of future generations, physically or morally.

In this connection, we cannot but remember there is one people that seems to be an exception to the rule that when a nation has reached the zenith of its power, it then declines. "The survival of the Jews" was the answer given by the philosopher to the German king who asked for irrefutable evidence of the overruling providence of God in human history. The Jews, with their clear history of more than three thousand years, and their present existence as a distinct people undiminished in numbers and influence, present this national singularity.

Yet all the evils which weaken and finally destroy the vitality of nations assailed the Jewish people. They were diminished and brought low very often by plague, pestilence, and famine; they were exposed to all the temptations of intemperance, ease, luxury, and immorality, the immorality being all the more subtle and deadly because often covered by the name of religion; the purity of the national stock was affected by intermarriage with inferior peoples; there were periods when kings and courts were utterly corrupt, when there were no great men, when the prophets no longer prophesied, and religion ebbed very low; as a nation they were carried into captivity, and so few returned that the national stock, as one of the prophets declared, was cut to the ground; their holy temple, with its worship and sacrifices, which did so much to maintain the national unity, was destroyed and never rebuilt; wars and cruel persecutions have decimated them; long exile has scattered them over the face of the earth, and everywhere they have been hated, despised, and persecuted. Yet still the Jews maintained their existence as

a separate people, as if masters of some hidden, saving power not possessed by other nations, or only held by them for a limited period. What is this power?

In the consideration of this question, frequent reference will be made to the laws and regulations of the Pentateuch bearing on disease and sanitation, marriage and divorce, education, and other matters on which the welfare of the state depends, in order to ascertain to what extent, if any, the long course of Jewish history is due to the observance of these laws. Concurrently, a cursory examination will be made of the alleged signs of decay in Western civilization, in the light of Jewish laws and history.

II. THE STOCK OF THE NATION.

"By their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?"—*Matt.* vii. 16.

It is important for the strength and long survival of a nation that its citizens shall come of good and vigorous stock or stocks. By the word "stock" is meant the inherited bodily and mental features which serve to distinguish one race of people from another. "Purity" of stock is an anthropological abstraction. No race or nation can claim exceptional purity or nobility of descent.

The problem of man's antiquity is not yet solved. According to the latest ethnological theory, in the far distant past there existed not one type only, but several very different types of humanity.¹ All have become extinct except the one branch that has given origin to modern man. In support of the view that the whole human race now on the earth is of common descent, it is found that human beings of all nationalities, whether white, yellow, red, black, or brown, although so different on the surface, are yet so similar in their struc-

¹ But see Wright's *Origin and Antiquity of Man*, chap. xii.

ture and constitution, that it must be supposed all have a common origin. No criterion can be relied on infallibly to distinguish one race or people from another, whether it be the shape of the head, the color of the skin, or other anatomical or physiological peculiarity. In Scriptural language, God hath made of one blood all the nations of the earth.

Nevertheless, the physical and mental traits which differentiate peoples and races, once they have appeared, are of such an abiding character as to seem fundamental, if they are not really so. Their origin is concurrent with the beginnings of human society. A national type begins to be formed when a number of people, perhaps loosely connected by ties of kinship, or who have drifted together for mutual advantage, become more or less isolated by the force of circumstances. The evolutionary tendency to constant variation in all directions is then gradually restrained. To meet the spiritual and social needs of the community, beliefs and customs arise, which are not the outcome of the individual mind, but are a force as superior to it as the life of an organism is greater than the life of any of its component cells. Being perpetuated by the society itself these customs and beliefs become hereditary, and so generation after generation of the community are brought under their influence and are molded by them into a concordant and compact organization. The peculiar mental outlook and social qualities thus produced, accompanied perhaps by inborn physical qualities which mark them off from other peoples, form the "stock," which is now an enduring and distinctive inheritance. It is the social organization, not blood, nor language, nor a common territory, which makes a people one.

If the inheritance thus formed enables the race to survive in the struggle for existence, the stock for the time being is

of the right kind. But as man himself and his environment are constantly changing, the qualities which at one period determine that a stock is good, may not be the best when circumstances are quite different. Natural selection, it is true, works uniformly in eliminating the unfit; but the law of the survival of the fittest simply declares that the creatures which survive are the fittest by the very fact of their survival, irrespective of what their form or character may be. Adaptation to environment is the only test. The same process which produces creatures in an ascending scale of usefulness and beauty, produces others which men regard with pity or abhorrence. This apparent indifference of nature to human standards is seen even in the changes which take place in our own social organization. If the higher classes in a civilized nation are steadily dwindling, and the feeble-minded are multiplying rapidly, there is no gainsaying the fact that, according to the law of natural selection, the feeble-minded are the better fitted to survive. From this point of view, the disquieting question of Bishop Butler as to the possibility of a whole nation becoming insane, is not fantastic. Of course this is hardly likely to happen, as the death rate among the feeble-minded is also very high; and, as nature works on a wide field, a nation of the feeble-minded would stand little chance in the struggle with strong-minded nations. The point is, it is not always easy to say what is or is not a good stock, nor to harmonize the standards of the moralist and eugenist with the standards of nature.

In primitive stages of civilization the qualities which insure survival are physical strength, craftiness, ferocity, blood-thirstiness. As intellectual and moral progress is made, other qualities become of greater importance, and man interferes more and more with the mere mechanical operation of

the law of natural selection. Even the presence of human weakness serves a useful purpose, as in its moral appeal to the strong it accelerates the moral development of the people. Evolution proceeds in sundry ways and divers manners, so there can be no immutable standard of human fitness.

Without going further into the subject, it may be said that in these days a nation is of bad stock if it produces a disproportionate number of idiots, imbeciles, epileptics, chronic drunkards, habitual criminals, professional paupers, and other wastrels and undesirables. A nation is of good stock if the physical and mental strength of the people is well up to the average; if the birth rate is high and the death rate low; if racial immunity has been acquired against the most destructive diseases by the weeding out, generation after generation, of those peculiarly subject to them; if there is quick adaptation to changing circumstances; if the common personal and civic virtues are highly valued; and if the people are inspired by the consciousness of a great national destiny.

The Jews by their long history have proved the virtue of their stock. But they can lay claim to no superiority or purity of origin. Their race arose in that part of the world in which for thousands of years the ingredients of early civilizations were mixed as in a crucible. Eventually, from the blending of Arabian kinsmen of the pre-dynastic Egyptians with the Asiatic strain designated Alpine or Armenoid, of which the Hittites of Asia Minor were a formidable offshoot, the Semitic race was produced. The Hebrews still preserve the strongly marked physiognomy and other characteristics of their distant ancestors.¹

¹G. Elliot Smith, *The Ancient Egyptians*. The term "Hittites" may have been used by the Hebrews simply as a label for any people recognized as being of alien race (MacAlister, *History of Civilization in Palestine*).

To preserve and strengthen the distinctive traits of a people, intermarriage with alien peoples must be restricted. Very early in their history, according to the Scriptures, mixed marriages were regarded with disfavor by the Hebrews. It grieved the minds of parents when their children married outside the tribe (Gen. xxvi. 35). In Deuteronomy such marriages were positively forbidden, and elsewhere in Scripture they are denounced. Nevertheless they occurred. Abraham formed an alliance with Hagar the Egyptian; Esau chose wives from among the daughters of the Hittites; the tribe of Judah was of mixed origin; the Egyptian wife of Joseph was the ancestress of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh; the tribe of Benjamin was recruited by marriage with the daughters of Shiloh; even Moses married a Cushite. When the Hebrews migrated to Palestine they intermarried with Canaanites, Amorites, and other previous inhabitants of the land. "Thy origin and thy nativity," said the prophet Ezekiel to his people, "is of the land of the Canaanite; the Amorite was thy father, and thy mother was an Hittite" (Ezek. xvi. 3). Babylonians and Bedouins, Hebrews and Phœnicians, Assyrians and Amorites, were all united by the closest bonds of blood brotherhood.

Writers on eugenics occasionally seem to be of opinion that the suitable mating of the fit, and the prevention of the marriage of the unfit, can be easily and certainly arranged by the pressure of medical authority or by legal enactments of the state, as if young men and women in forming alliances were governed only by prudential motives. Unless there is unconquerable racial aversion, as between the whites and the blacks in America, it takes very many years to create public sentiment sufficiently strong to influence the course of marriage in any particular direction, and it never can be created unless

the prudential motives are reinforced by powerful religious and patriotic considerations.

What is the effect upon the national stock of mixed marriages? In a learned work written some years ago and still of value, it is contended that miscegenation was the chief cause of the downfall of nations. The author held that "degenerate" when applied to a nation signifies, or should signify, it has changed in essence because successive crossings have gradually altered its ethnological value. In other words, a degenerate nation retains the name, but not the unmixed blood, of the more heroic men who were the founders of its greatness.¹

This theory rests on the supposition that the human race is sharply divided into three subspecies,—the white, the yellow, and the black,—which differ in as great degree as the generic subdivisions of the animal kingdom, the progeny of the mixed strains being equally degenerate or abnormal. As there is no such fundamental difference, the meaning of miscegenation must be stretched to cover intermarriage between different tribes and nations even when there is no very perceptible difference in the color of the skin. Even so it is a doubtful argument. Historians cite Rome as an instance of an empire being ruined by miscegenation. Unquestionably, war and slavery brought into Rome a great influx of Goths, Huns, Vandals and other aliens, which doubtless weakened the stock of the nation to some degree. But the national decline was due far more to the actual displacement of the native population by foreigners, than to the degeneracy produced by miscegenation with them. Civil wars, proscriptions, and endless bloodshed had thinned the numbers of the gen-

¹ De Gobineau, *Essai sur l'inégalité des Races Humaines*; see, also, *The Nineteenth Century and After*, July, 1911.

trine Roman families; and moral corruption, the disinclination to marriage, and the childlessness of the married completed their practical extinction. Of course the vast slave population was diminished by the same causes as well as by bad treatment and severe labor, but their losses were replaced by reinforcements from all quarters of the globe.

It is another argument against this theory, that the crossing of diverse strains is not always injurious; for history seems to indicate that when a nation is decaying, nothing so rejuvenates it as crossing with a younger and more vigorous race.¹ The most successful race of modern times is the Anglo-Saxon, which certainly comes of very mixed stock; and in the United States a marvelous blending of various stocks is taking place to the great advantage, apparently, of the American nation as a whole.

Yet there is a limit beyond which the mingling of peoples cannot be safely carried. A small nation in contact with a larger one of superior culture, and intermarrying with it, runs great risk of forfeiting its separate existence by its absorption. At the present time the intermarriage with Gentiles by the Jews of western Europe has made their extinction as a people in that part of the world inevitable, unless it can be averted by inducing them to migrate to Palestine. For "Zionism" is not a mere national or chauvinistic caprice, but the last desperate struggle of a people against annihilation. Should the denationalizing process, which in western Europe has already crushed all independent Jewish culture, spread to eastern Europe and to America,—and there are signs that it is beginning to do so,—all is over with the Jews.

There was the same danger in the past during the Greek and Arabian epochs. The Jews were preserved by the cir-

¹ *Petrie, The Revolutions of Civilization.*

cumstance that just when their end seemed nearest, large numbers of them were expelled from the assimilating community, and they withdrew to civilization on a lower level. But for this, writes a Jewish author, there might now be no Jews at all.¹

Even the stock of a powerful nation may be seriously impaired by the constant influx of alien peoples of poor physique and lower moral and social standards, but of greater fertility. Hence some of the leading nations of the world are finding it is necessary to restrict immigration, and thus secure some of the advantages of racial isolation. In fact, ethnologists are declaring that to produce a higher type of civilization than any now existing, it will be necessary to segregate one or more of the finer races, and prevent all intermingling with them by people of inferior stock. The peoples of ancient Greece and Rome, and in more modern times the nations of England and Japan, arose from definite crossings at various periods, and subsequent isolation secured to them by their geographical position on peninsulas or islands.

As evolution proceeds on various lines, isolation at times may be necessary for the spiritual and moral development of a people, as well as for its physical well-being. The spiritual evolution of mankind was to depend mainly on the Jews. They were to be the chosen people, a consecrated nation, intrusted with the proclamation of the goodness of God, who was going to call them out of darkness into his wonderful light. To prepare them for their high calling, they must be separated from other peoples. The land to which they migrated after leaving Egypt was very suitable for this purpose, though not for them all to the same degree. The main

¹ Rupplin, *Die Juden der Gegenwart.*

lines of war and traffic lay through the rich lands of the ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom. The people of these tribes, in close contact with heathen nations, never acquired the strong religious fiber of their Southern countrymen, and after their exile disappear from history. On the other hand, the highlands of Judah, out of the line of main travel, proved the fit nursery of a vigorous and idealistic race, and in these highlands the true spirit of the Hebrew religion was preserved and developed.¹ "As for ourselves," writes Josephus, "we neither inhabit a maritime country, nor do we delight in merchandise, nor in such a mixture with other men as arises from it." The people of the Southern Kingdom also went into exile; but their religion was sufficiently strong to prevent their being merged with their conquerors, and they returned to their own land, chastened by sorrow, and with a deeper sense of their mission as the servants of God. Intermarriage with Gentiles was henceforward sternly forbidden. The discovery that certain priests, Levites, and some of the people had strange wives — there were only one hundred and thirteen mixed marriages all told — made the prophet Ezra so ashamed that he blushed to lift up his face unto God (Ezra ix. 6), and Nehemiah the statesman, in his indignation, cursed and smote the offenders. So the Jews became a separate and exclusive people, maintaining in proud isolation their national and spiritual integrity until, in the fullness of time, there appeared among them the Saviour of the world.

It is an important lesson, enforced by Jewish history, that if a nation is to fulfill its own particular destiny, it must be within the limits in which sharply defined national types are produced; and therefore it cannot permit with safety the low-

¹ Huntington, *Palestine and its Transformation*.

ering of its physical, social, moral, and religious standards, by excessive mixture with people of inferior stock.

III. THE HOMES OF THE NATION.

"The foundations of national glory are set in the homes of the people. They will only remain unshaken while the family life of our race and nation is strong, simple, and pure."

King George V. of England.

Recent investigations prove that the marital relations of even the most primitive peoples were of a far higher standard than was formerly supposed. "There is, in fact, no single primitive people whose sexual relations approached a condition of promiscuity or even hinted at such a thing. The firmly knit individual family is by no means a late achievement in civilization, it exists in the lowest stages of culture as a rule without exception."¹ And the necessities and obligations of family life developed the high moral qualities which distinguish human beings from the lower animals. In the home the character of the young is formed, which in turn determines the character of the people. Thus the family is by far the most efficacious of all the social subdivisions the function of which is to adapt the individual to social life, and the disintegration of the home cannot but produce the disintegration of the larger society of which it is a part.

In a declining civilization, family life loses its sacred character, divorces are common, and children are not desired. It may be going too far to assert this alone is sufficient to ruin a nation; but it cannot be denied that one thing in common that preceded the fall of the civilizations of Athens, Rome, Spain, and Venice was the low estimation of the home. During the five centuries when Rome was rising to greatness, divorces were unknown. In the closing years of the

¹ Grosse, *Die Formen der Familie.*

empire, marriage was regarded with disfavor and disdain. "There is not a woman left," writes Seneca, "who is ashamed of being divorced, now that most of the high and distinguished ladies count their years, not by the consular fasti, but by the number of their husbands, and are divorced in order to marry, and marry in order to be divorced." A nation which has reached this pass is in an extremely perilous state. It is not surprising, therefore, that at the present time thoughtful people are viewing with the gravest concern the ease with which divorces can be obtained in Christian lands and their rapidly increasing number.¹

In accord with the custom common among all Oriental nations marriage among the Jews was practically incumbent upon all, and early marriage was the almost invariable rule. For a man or woman to remain unmarried, unless under special religious vows, was to incur reproach. Consequently, every woman had her own home and family duties, and there was no surplus of unmarried females to produce an unstable and disturbing element in the national life. It has been conjectured that the astonishing national vitality of the

¹ One of the most unpleasant and dangerous features of American life, observes a distinguished American statesman, is the diminishing birth rate and the loosening of the marital tie among the old native American families. In the twenty years 1887-1906, no less than 945,625 divorces were granted in the United States. The rate of increase, compared with preceding years, is far greater than the rate of increase in population. In 1870 there were 81 divorces per 100,000 of married population. In 1900 the proportion had increased to two hundred. Of existing marriages the chances are that one marriage in every sixteen will be dissolved by divorce, perhaps one in twelve. The situation is the more serious, as in the United States the number of divorced persons reported by the general census of population is grossly deficient, because many persons who are divorced, being sensitive in regard to the fact, report themselves as single or married (U. S. Census Reports, 1909).

Jews is due in no small degree to their custom of early marriage.¹

In the Jewish home the wife held a high position, especially after the Exile, when monogamy prevailed. During the first year of married life, the husband was exempt from military service and the demands of important business, so that he could stay at home and cheer his wife (Deut. xxiv. 5). In contrast with the looseness of the marriage tie among surrounding nations and during their own earlier history, the Deuteronomic code stipulated that a wife could not be divorced at the arbitrary will and pleasure of her husband and by mere word of mouth, but only for moral delinquency, and by means of a written and formal document. If the divorced wife did not contract a new marriage, the husband might take her back. In the course of time, because of the hardness of men's hearts, divorces became frequent, and were often given for slight cause; but the strength of public feeling was against such divorces, and they never became so common as to impair the vitality of the nation. When Jesus Christ was questioned on the subject, he set forth the perpetuity of the marriage bond, and declared that divorce, unless possibly for the gravest marital sin, contravened the order of nature, and the will of God as revealed in the earliest Hebrew scriptures.

Viewing broadly the social status of Jewish woman in ancient times, while it may be admitted that, as compared with the position of woman in modern Western civilization, she suffered many legal and social disabilities, yet in the home, as wife and mother, her position was very high. And the whole family life was distinguished for its simple, sincere piety. In the Decalogue the commandment to honor

¹ Leroy Beaulieu, *Israel chez les Nations.*

father and mother immediately follows the commandments which relate to the worship of God, and the promise attached to it that the days of those who revered their parents would be long in the land almost necessarily carried with it the promise of national longevity. "The parental love and care, and the corresponding reverence and obedience in the households of Israel, are an example to us to all time." When the Son of God came down to earth he lived in humble Jewish homes. Surely of the Jews it may be asserted that the foundations of their national strength and glory were set in the homes of their people.

(To be continued.)