

**OUR FUTURE PROGRESS: BEING A BRIEF  
DIGEST OF THE NECESSARY MEASURES TO  
BE ADOPTED TO SECURE THE POLITICAL,  
SOCIAL, INDUSTRIAL, EDUCATIONAL,  
INDIVIDUAL, AND DOMESTIC IMPROVEMENT  
OF ALL CLASSES OF THE COMMUNITY**

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Our Future Progress: Being a Brief Digest of the Necessary Measures to be adopted to secure the Political, Social, Industrial, Educational, Individual, and Domestic Improvement of all Classes of the Community by Alfred A. Walton

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**ALFRED A. WALTON**

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## PREFACE.

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IN entering upon these all important subjects, namely, the Political, Social, Industrial, Educational, Individual, and Domestic Improvement of all classes of the community, and it is difficult to say which of these questions,—all greatly affecting the destinies of nations and the happiness of peoples,—are deserving the most attention. They are all so nearly allied, and are of such vital and paramount importance, that taking them in their entirety, they may be said to constitute a complete formula of civilised life, and just in proportion as they become properly understood and practiced, in like proportion will humanity become elevated;—the progress of nations and the happiness of peoples secured. In treating these subjects in the consecutive order in which they are arranged, I have necessarily given precedence to the governmental, social, and industrial arrangement of States; because these arrangements, whether good or bad, form the foundation and framework both of civilised and uncivilised communities, while educational, individual, and domestic perfection and completeness, may be said to be the ornaments which are indispensable to embellish and complete the whole superstructure of a truly civilised state of society.

ALFRED A. WALTON.

## OUR FUTURE PROGRESS

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### POLITICAL SCIENCE AND LEGISLATIVE ACTION.

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**TAKING**, as the starting point, the legislatorial arrangements of a State to be the mainspring or motive power which sanctions and sets in motion all other subordinate principles which regulate human affairs, it follows that the development and harmonious working of the mechanism of a well regulated State should be as perfect as human wisdom can make it. The first, and, indeed, the chief duty of a Government ought to be to frame its laws and conduct its legislation so as to diminish as far as possible the antagonism of class interests, and to assimilate and make them as near as possible practically identical.

This can never be accomplished while two parties, or rather factions, in any legislative assembly are continually struggling for ascendancy and power,—frequently by the most unscrupulous means. No doubt the very essence of parliamentary life is free discussion elevated above factious opposition. It is a sifting to the bottom of all questions coming within the pale of legislative authority or parliamentary inquiry. To do this, however, it is not necessary to have two hostile camps either in the State or the Parliament. History proves that the great draw back to the true advancement and development of the science of legislation all over the world has been the ambition and restlessness of an implacable reactionary party, which arrogates to itself the right to hold dominion over the rest of mankind, and would rather ruin a nation than cease to rule. Happily this party of obstruction has become greatly weakened and attenuated by the increase of education and free discussion under constitutional Governments, although it is far from being extinct in the freest of States.

What is wanted above all things within the walls of Parliament, as well as in the people, is a sound, healthy, political morality. To create this will, no doubt, be a work of time, which will gradually approach as the virulence of parties disappears, and our electoral system becomes more perfected and pure. There is another important element indispensable to the proper discharge of legislative functions, namely, the fitness and capacity for legislative duties of those aspiring to the dignity, responsibility, and trust of legislators. It is a serious mistake, and a corresponding evil, to select

men, either to go to Parliament or perform other important duties, whose chief recommendation may be either their station or their wealth, but who in other respects are totally incompetent to discharge the duties assigned them. Yet this is what we may continually behold as being practised every day whenever a vacancy in Parliament occurs, or appointments of profit or emolument are made.

There can be no real parliamentary sympathy with, or fitness to legislate for, the wants and wishes of a people where their representatives are, in too many instances, lamentably ignorant of the many questions affecting the interest of the people and the prosperity of the nation. Surely no man in his senses would go to a shoemaker, instead of a tailor, if he wanted a coat, nor apply to a lawyer if he required medical aid. Yet the mode by which members of the British Parliament have, in many instances, been selected is not a bit more rational, nor the selection more suitable, than the choice of the shoemaker instead of the tailor, or the lawyer instead of the doctor.

If any proof were wanting of the truth of this statement it may easily be ascertained by simply asking, how many of the 658 members of the House of Commons there are who really understand,—we need not say all,—but any of the great questions which will have to come before Parliament for consideration and settlement before long? How many of them, for instance, understand the land question, the currency question, the re-adjustment of taxation in conformity with the true principles of commercial freedom, the labour question, the co-operative movement, the educational question, and the many other questions, both domestic and foreign, that will come before Parliament for settlement? Why, the most ordinary observer of parliamentary life knows that, with the exception of a few who possess great abilities and most extensive knowledge, by far the greater part of the men sent there are mere political nonentities. The remedy for this must, of course, rest with the electoral body. As long as men are selected by private favour from select circles, rather than for public worth, we shall always more or less have a corrupt Parliament, no matter what the extent of the franchise may be.

No doubt, the wider the representative system, and the broader the basis, the greater the probability of pureness of election. Of course, this assumes the electoral body to be sufficiently well instructed in political matters to guide them in the election of their representatives. But even if there should be any short-comings in that respect, a system of free and uninterrupted popular repre-



sentation would in itself, in the long run, cure any defects in that respect. All men who aspire to become the representatives of a free people ought to be the leaders of public opinion and not the unwilling converts and followers of the great principles of human progress; giving their unwilling assent only when dogged opposition has become a forlorn hope and public opinion has pronounced unmistakably against them. Unhappily, this has too frequently been the case in the parliamentary history of England. Let us hope it may hereafter be discontinued. A legitimate opposition and a sifting of all things to the uttermost is not only necessary but highly conducive to a just conclusion and proper settlement of all questions. Indeed the very soul and essence of parliamentary life must ever consist in the free and independent consideration and discussion of the merits of all public questions. If, however, this most wholesome and salutary safeguard to the proper settlement of public affairs be vitiated and perverted by factious opposition, to keep up and maintain unhallowed principles and glaring monopolies, then such opposition degenerates into a miserable faction of obstructives, and monopolising marplots, totally unworthy the countenance and support of the public.

The mode by which the election of Members of Parliament ought to be effected is no doubt of considerable importance also; and the chief difference to settle is between those who are in favour of secret and those in favour of open voting. To all men of independent mind and action secret voting seems not only distasteful but positively objectionable; and it is to be hoped that the time may arrive when every man will go forth to the polling booth free and unmolested, in the character and dignity of a man, and give his vote openly according to the light that may be within him. But unfortunately that time has not arrived yet. What then remains to be done? Why, any thing that will prevent those disgraceful scenes of bribery and corruption which have so frequently been exposed before election committees. One thing is certain, that until these corrupt practices, which are of many kinds, be as far as possible prevented and punished, the demoralisation of the electoral body must be the consequence, and the whole community must suffer in proportion from the debasing effects of a corrupt and licentious electioneering system. In all probability it will not only be found necessary to adopt secret voting—for a time at least—but also to have a penal enactment against these vile practices, accompanied with the loss of civil rights to the offenders.

The question of the proper distribution of electoral power, and

the duration of Parliaments, and other matters of detail, have been so long disaussed, and indeed settled in the public mind, that it would be superfluous to dwell longer upon them, because, although they are all of the highest importance in their particular bearing, they are after all but the A B C of politics. It is the great results that must follow their adoption that will occupy the attention of Parliament and the country in future. In fine, the great work that now lies before us for accomplishment is the social, industrial, educational, individual and domestic improvement of the whole community.

The science of political economy, taking it in all its bearings, is one of the most difficult of scientific attainments, and consequently, before any wise and judicious legislative action can be properly taken thereon, those who undertake to perform so important a duty ought to be well qualified, by study and diligent application, to acquire a clear and comprehensive knowledge of the great and important subjects entrusted to their judgement for consideration and adoption.

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## OUR FUTURE PROGRESS IN SOCIAL SCIENCE.

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### SOCIAL EVILS AND THEIR REMEDIES.

The social and legislatorial arrangements of a State are so intertwined and blended together that in examining the one we cannot properly separate it from the other. There can be no doubt but the political institutions of a nation exercise great influence in the formation of its social arrangements. It may, however, be safely affirmed that the very best of Governments cannot do so much for the social improvement of the people as they can do for themselves.

We cannot change men's nature by Acts of Parliament, nor make them intelligent, industrious, frugal, and well conditioned by statute law, but a great deal may be done to assist and afford them facilities to do all this for themselves, by salutary laws and wise legislation. The great fault with which previous legislation stands very properly charged is, that instead of affording facilities it has too frequently thrown obstacles in the way of social improvement and general progress. Because, in whatever station of life men may be placed, they are what we find them either more or less from the circumstances by which they are surrounded, and have acted upon them during their lives; and if selfish and unwise legislation has contributed to the creation of these unfavourable circumstances, all wise and well intentioned men will do their utmost to alter and improve such arrangements.

It is simply absurd, and totally at variance with the laws which govern our moral and physical natures, to create broad antagonistic social and individual distinctions, and then expect men to act as if they had an identity of interests. The great, the wealthy, the powerful, and the well-to-do are no more without their troubles under our present social system than the poorest beggar that walks the street, and yet they have no more power of escape from their social bondage than the outcast has from his degradation. The contrast between these two types of humanity is no doubt very great, and we should not, perhaps, have much difficulty in deciding which of the two classes to attach ourselves to if left to our own choice. But the vices belonging to both spring from the same cause, namely the anomalies and inequality of our social and legislatorial arrangements. And all the teachings and preaching of the hundred thousand ministers of religion in the United Kingdom