

THE HELPFUL SCIENCE

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649535781

The Helpful Science by St. George Mivart

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

ST. GEORGE MIVART

**THE HELPFUL
SCIENCE**

THE HELPFUL SCIENCE

BY

ST. GEORGE MIVART, F.R.S.



UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

NEW YORK
HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS

1895

B 53
M 5

TO THE
ANNUAL

Copyright, 1895, by HARPER & BROTHERS.

All rights reserved.

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

THE HELPFUL SCIENCE

Part I

It has been said reproachfully that man is fond of novelty. The reproach is unreasonable, since change is essential to both our bodily and mental health. Only through changes in its surroundings is the consciousness of the child first awakened, and only by the aid of fresh external or internal modifications is consciousness maintained in activity.

Moreover, though analogous social and political conditions frequently recur, it is impossible that any past experience can ever be truly repeated, and this not only on account of the ceaseless changes of our environment, but also from the very condi-

TO .VINU
2. ALSO THE HELPFUL SCIENCE

tions of our bodily frame. A nerve continuously stimulated fails, after a time, to respond to the stimulus, and thus it is that our appetite becomes jaded by an unceasing supply of what might at first have been the object of keen pursuit, and positive aversion often succeeds desire. Our taste changes again and again as we travel from childhood to old age, and education and culture notoriously modify man's inclinations and sentiments.

Thus it is simply inevitable that the feelings, tastes, and intellectual occupations of succeeding centuries must always be more or less divergent, although analogous recurrences may again and again take place.

That conditions should so recur is at least as desirable as it is inevitable. For of the many objects which merit our attention, all cannot at the same time be attended to in the degree they merit. Thus it is that in each age some objects may be not only unduly neglected, but even disliked, so that they need to be subsequently recalled to the attention of succeeding times. After the æs-

thetic outburst of Hellas came the wondrous jurisprudence and political sagacity of Rome, paving the way for those noble creations of mediævalism, feudal honor, devoted asceticism, majestic worship, and the keenest polish which the human intellect has ever received.

Then blossomed that great "recurrence," the Renaissance, once more bringing Plato into fashion, with a love for physical science akin to that which had existed in the mind of Aristotle. Therewith there naturally arose a feeling of aversion from what had charmed men before, with a neglect of one department of nature, just as another department had been previously neglected by mediæval students.

Political freedom and social amelioration were the next objects of pursuit among civilized mankind, and they have continued, with physical science, to be the main occupation of those not absorbed in seeking wealth; for wealth, as a source of pleasure and for its own sake, has doubtless been the pursuit of most men since the first human society arose.

The occupations of the immense majority of that part of mankind which is raised above the sordid need of seeking its daily bread, and is not merely devoted to pleasure, may be said to be travel, politics, philanthropy, the promotion of progress, useful knowledge, physical science, and art—all, variously and in different degrees, good and laudable. They are also practical pursuits. They are concerned with “doing” as well as with “knowing.” What is *practical* has special charms for us, for the English-speaking races of mankind are, in all climes, eminently *doers*. Our profound respect for work, for “doing” (as has been before remarked), is shown by the familiar usage of our mother-tongue. We English speakers greet each other with, “How do you *do*?” A Frenchman says, with an implied regard for appearances, “How do you *carry yourself*?” A German ascends at once to the highest abstractions, and asks, “How goes *it*?” A Spaniard, as one who first crossed the Atlantic, inquires, “How do you *go*?” while the Italian, for so long a time unprogressive,

says, "How do you *stand*?" or even insinuates the *dolce far niente* by asking, "How do you *exist*?" Only the English-speaking man seems instinctively to feel that you cannot be in a satisfactory state unless you are *doing* something. To those who are aware they so feel, and are therewith content, these papers are addressed. Their aim is to be eminently practical.

But readers who know anything of the present writer may reply: "You are not practical yourself. You are no politician or mechanic, no lawyer or medical practitioner, not even an artist; you pursue science for its own sake!" The statement is true, but has no force as an objection; for we know how often the most solid and extensive practical gains have been due to abstruse and seemingly most unpractical exertions of thought and endeavor. In America useful deductions from abstruse studies have been exceptionally developed, and the whole civilized world is being lighted—and men are invited to read, to play, to pray, or to sin—through the help of Franklin's brain.