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PURITANISM

BY GUGLIELMO FERRERO

GENERAL surprise was expressed when, at the close of 1906, on my return from Paris, where I had been giving a course of lectures on Roman history at the Collège de France, I announced that I had accepted the invitation tendered me by Emilio Mitre to undertake a long journey to South America. What should I, a historian of the ancient world, be doing in that newest of worlds, in that ultra modern continent, in those eminently practical lands, without a past, interested only in the future, where manufactures and agriculture occupy that place in society which in the ancient world was given to war? Were there no other countries which could interest me more? Why, if I were willing to leave my books and my studies, to travel, did I not go to Egypt or to the East, where so much of the history which I had narrated originated; where the Romans had left so many traces of their occupation; where so many important excavations were being made; and thus enrich historiography with new documents?

Whereupon, I made answer that I was no book-worm, interested only in books and archaeological remains; that I was interested in life under all its aspects, and therefore, after having studied the peoples of the ancient world, I

was interested in studying somewhat these most modern of people, the last to make their appearance in the history of our civilization. Because I happened to have written a history of Rome, was I to undertake never again to cast a glance at the modern world?

Yet, even while thus explaining the reason for my journey, I was as firmly persuaded as any of the friends who raised such objections, that my going to America would simply be a parenthesis in my intellectual life; that there could not be the slightest connection between such a journey and my studies of ancient history; that, in a word, I was going to America to seek diversion and intellectual relief, to distract my mind, which for ten years had been over-full of things ancient, by turning it into an entirely different channel. That this diversion would be of use to me I was sure, not because America was to aid me to a better understanding of ancient Rome, but because I have always thought it most helpful, especially for a historian, — who has need of knowing many things, — to change, from time to time, the subject-matter of his studies, and to enrich his mind with new ideas. After visiting, however, not only the two largest and most flourishing countries of South America,

but the United States as well, — which, better than the other countries of the New World, represents to the eyes of contemporary Europe the most modern element of our civilization, the kingdom of the machine, the empire of business, the realm of money, — I am no longer of this opinion. Now I think that a journey to the New World is, above all, intellectually useful to a historian of the ancient world, and that in order to understand the life and the history of Greek or Roman society, it is quite as useful, if not more so, to visit the countries of America as to visit Asia Minor or North Africa.

On one of the last days of my stay in the United States I said this to a congenial professor of ancient history at Cornell, with whom I was talking over our common work and discussing the most famous schools of the day and the methods used in them.

‘Many of you,’ I said, ‘go to German universities to study ancient history. I think you might better invite some of these German professors to take an advanced course in America: studying, not so much in the libraries as in real life, observing what is going on in American society. No one is in a better position than you to understand ancient society.’

This statement may at first sight seem paradoxical, but nothing during my journeys in the two Americas has impressed me, as a historian of ancient Rome, more profoundly than the discovery in the New World of many of those phenomena of the Old World which, after the lapse of so many centuries of civilization, have disappeared from Europe. What we, at the beginning of the twentieth century, call ancient civilization, was in reality a new and young civilization, flourishing, but with few centuries of historical background, similar to the American civilization of to-day; and for that reason,

we find in it, although in a lesser degree, all those phenomena which seem to characterize American as compared with European society. I shall try, therefore, to throw some light on the most important of those points in which the ancient and the very new world resemble each other.

Those who have read my *Greatness and Decline of Rome* know that I have tried to show how one of the essential phenomena of Roman history was the struggle between traditional Roman puritanism and the refined, corrupt, artistic civilization of the Hellenized East. For centuries the old Roman aristocracy sought, through legislation and example and especially through religion, to impose upon all classes simple and pure customs, to check the increase of luxury, to keep the family united and strong, to curb dissolute and perverse instincts, to give a character of decency and propriety to all forms of amusement, even at the cost of imposing upon all aspects of Roman life an unadorned simplicity, and of rendering difficult the development of the arts. In ancient Rome the effort to preserve the morality of the past, the old simplicity and the religious spirit of former generations, was so great, and occupied so important a share in social activity, that from it resulted burning political struggles, law-suits, and tragedies, laws severe and terrible. The family of Augustus, for example, was almost wholly destroyed in the struggle between old puritanism and Asiatic civilization.

To understand the motives and fury of this struggle is not impossible in Europe, but it is difficult. For even in its protestant countries, Europe has been too long and too thoroughly under oriental influence to be able easily to imagine a state so strongly dominated by the force of the puritanical ideal. In

Europe, luxury has been regarded as a species of solemn, social function proper to the monarchy, the state, and the church, for too many centuries to admit of its not being regarded by the masses as a pleasing spectacle, a sign of greatness, a cause of national pride and a source of profit, rather than in the light of a moral and social danger. Besides, after centuries of license, literature and art have assumed the right to beautify even vice, and having beautified it, have cast it loose; and so, however much religious teachers, moralists, and even governments may try to rouse some power of resistance, the resisting force is no longer strong enough, even in protestant states, to produce a social struggle against existing conditions. Every one in Europe has come to accept this liberty as an evil inherent in modern civilization, and though many try to minimize its effects, no one, or hardly any one, thinks any longer that the evil can be eradicated.

In North America, on the other hand, it is much easier to understand this aspect of Roman history, because there the same fight is again being fought, with much greater earnestness than in Europe.

Precisely as in the age of fable, which eludes our historical knowledge, Rome was founded by a puritanical religion, so it was with New England, that vital nucleus around which the United States was formed by a process of aggregation. This puritanic religion stamped American society with a seriousness, austerity, and simplicity which in America, as in Rome, was preserved without effort. It was preserved just so long as the times were hard and difficult, just so long as men were satisfied with a modest, hard-earned competency. But when, thanks to the favorable conditions in which America, not unlike Rome, came into her own, her territory extended by conquest, her industries

developed, her population multiplied, her wealth heaped swiftly up by economic progress, and when increase of wealth and more frequent contact with the old world, together with greater European immigration, increased in America the tendency to borrow from Europe those aspects of its civilization which were the most ancient and most artistic, even if less pure morally, — then, I say, there occurred in America what occurred in Rome when increased wealth and nearer intimacy with the East caused the civilization of Asia to be better known and appreciated: the old puritan ideal in America came to a hand-to-hand struggle against corruption, against the breaking-up of the family, against those vices which are bred in the slums of great cities.

This theory explains a curious fact, and that is, that there has happened to North America in relation to Europe, within the memory of men, exactly what has happened in past history to many great Roman personages, and especially to the emperors of the Julio-Claudian line. To some readers this comparison must seem rather strange, but I hope that with a little explanation it will become more intelligible. It is well known that there is in Roman history a period which, from the reputation that it bears, may well be called infamous. This extends from the death of Sulla to the death of Nero, including the end of the Republic and the early years of the Empire. This period has a very bad reputation: not only was it full of disorder, civil war, scandalous law-suits, but nearly all of its most illustrious personages were notoriously vicious, beginning with the most illustrious of them all, Julius Cæsar. All were deep in debt, drunkards, gluttons, spendthrifts; they were reputed dissolute, when not accused outright of giving themselves up to the most degrading pollution. There is no infamy that

has not been attributed to them. Only a very few have escaped this universal censure; and, with the exception of Pompey and Agrippa, those who did escape were of minor importance. The others were either odious in the extreme, or else depraved like Lucullus, Crassus, Antony, Augustus, Mæcenæ, Tiberius, Nero, — to say nothing of the women of the Claudian line, who, when they were not poisoners outright, were women of evil life, about whom historians tell every kind of horror.

Therefore this period of history has furnished much material for novelists and dramatists who needed picturesque and striking plots. But a philosopher with a little knowledge of human nature asks himself at once why, in the course of that century and a half, men should be born with such propensities. The critic who examines these tales with a little care soon perceives impossibilities, contradictions, and details which are palpable inventions. Many of these romances would have had less popularity if historians had all asked themselves on reading Suetonius: How came Suetonius to know all these facts? Who could have told them? Thus, following the course of events, it is quite possible to gain a more precise and a simpler idea of these personages, putting them back into their place among common humanity with the usual vices and the usual virtues, and then reduce to the absurd those stories which are quite impossible of verification.

How then are we to explain that terrible reputation for vice, debt, prodigality, and extravagance? In that period the struggle between the old Roman puritanism and corrupt Asiatic civilization raged fiercest, and in the course of the struggle, exaggerated as all moral struggles are, a legend developed which is simply the exaggeration of a reality. To the old Roman conscience that first bold appearance of alien ways in the

full light of day, that first open attempt at a life more freed from the conventions, was nothing short of an awful calamity. The puritan conscience reacted quickly because it still had life. It described in terrible and lurid colors the corruption of its time, while a later period, like that of the Antonines, in which corruption was much deeper and more universal, has passed in history as relatively moral, simply because at that time the puritan conscience was no longer living. These later periods considered as natural and inevitable vices and disorders much more serious than those which, in Cæsar's time, when the moral conscience was still keen, seemed to be abominable depravity. Men no longer protested as in former times, and posterity, finding that no contemporary spoke of the vice of his time, imagined that those periods were models of virtue. Thus it is that in those periods of the world's history in which corruption is most talked about, it is a sign that there is still a moral consciousness strong enough to protest against evil.

Something similar to this chapter in the history of Rome has happened and is happening in North America. Among the many extravagant opinions which are being formed in Europe about America there is one which looks upon the United States much as certain puritans in Cæsar's time looked upon Rome: as the most colossal sink of every vice which wealth can produce; as the country where luxury has taken on the wildest and most extravagant forms; corruption, the most incredible audacity; pleasure, unbridled license. The newspapers, especially the yellow journals, are the organs which are creating this opinion. They describe from time to time the Neronian feasts of some multimillionaire, the sultana-like caprices of some over-rich American lady, and publish, with careless comments, statistics

of divorce or of the consumption of alcohol. Again they detail, as if it were a Roman orgy, the wild excesses of some popular celebration: for example, the suppers with which the New Year is ushered in. They scatter broadcast the most scandalous details of trials sufficiently scandalous to aspire to the honor of being cabled across the ocean.

In all sincerity I must confess that when I started for New York I had many of these ideas and prejudices myself, and I expected to set foot in a modern Babylon. If we read newspapers carelessly, without submitting their statements to a careful investigation, we end by warping our opinions, even if we are reasonable and educated persons. Once landed in America, it was easy for me to see that in the legend there was great exaggeration. For example, there is such a thing as American luxury, but it is very different from what the European imagines it to be. It is the extravagance of the middle rather than the upper classes. I have often had occasion to note, while in the company of men who live on a salary, professional men, business men, and manufacturers of moderate means, that persons of the same status in Europe would live much more simply, or at least would spend less freely than in America. But as for the extravagance of the rich, or very rich, it is indisputably greater in Europe. The legend of the wild, unheard-of extravagance of the rich in America could only have been created and circulated throughout Europe by persons, whether American or European, who had no idea of the extravagance of the rich classes in Europe, especially in those two great centres of European wealth, London and Paris. The European acquainted with the extravagance of Europe receives the impression on arriving in America that he is passing from a world in which extravagance is fostered and encour-

aged by the traditions of ages, to one where, on the contrary, it is limited and held in check by a thousand moral obstacles, puritan traditions, democratic principles, the reluctance of society at large to admire the rich who spend selfishly, — a conspiracy, as it were, of social forces which obliges the rich to spend for others.

It is much the same, I should say, with the vices common nowadays to city life. All that I have seen and heard concerning the vice of great American cities, alcoholism, gambling, immorality, seems to me to be neither more nor less than I have seen in all the great cities of Europe. I have noticed these sad features of modern civilization, but they are no more hideous in America than elsewhere. I shall never forget the evening which I spent with an agreeable and clever journalist who took me to see the horrors of New York. For several hours we went about to restaurants, bars, and places of amusement. I saw and noted with great attention what was pointed out to me, but I could not help, at last, coming to the conclusion that some day, if I were to take my guide on a similar tour around one of the great capitals of Europe, I could show him much more! Taking the Catholic countries of Europe as the basis of comparison, the only difference that I could perceive was that in America the family tie is weaker. Divorce is too easy by far; the women are too emancipated; the children too independent of parental control. In this respect it has seemed to me that America has reached a limit beyond which really dangerous social disorder lies.

What then is the explanation of the fact that in the European world every one is talking of American extravagance, American vice, American corruption, and of disorders of every kind which afflict the American family, city, state, and affairs? Why are noisy New Year's

Eve suppers described in Europe as if they were the orgies of Heliogabalus? This may all be explained exactly as was the evil reputation of the last century of the Republic and the first century of the Empire, as compared with the second century: because in America the Puritan origin of the state is still not far behind us, and the reaction of the moral consciousness is greater than it is in Europe against the progress of that extravagance, corruption, and vice which accompany a rich, urban, mercantile civilization. In Europe, on the other hand, the moral consciousness has for a long time been accustomed to consider all this as inevitable and, for the present at least, impossible to reform, and therefore makes no protest; exactly as the men of the second century no longer cried out against those many evils which were intolerable to the men of the first century. In America, there is still protest; in Europe, there is silence; therefore superficial observers conclude that in the one place there is vice, in the other none, while in reality evil exists on both sides of the ocean, but on the American side there is still faith that it may be extirpated, and there is a will to attempt the work of purification. On our side the present conditions are accepted without a word, just as they are, the good with the bad. Who is right? Who is wrong? I may only say such is the present situation.

Under this very important aspect, the condition of the United States is much nearer to that of ancient Rome than is the condition of the present-day Europe. And this explains to me why this side of my history has been more quickly and profoundly understood in America than it has in Europe. The chief reason which attracted Theodore Roosevelt to my book — he told me this more than once in Washington — was the struggle between two principles

which I had described, and which had seemed to him to shed so much light on the confusion and excitement of men and things which stir the United States at the present day. How often have I heard this same observation made in private conversation and public speech, in New York as well as in Boston, in Philadelphia as well as in Chicago! Indeed in Chicago the similarity between American and Roman puritanism was the subject of an interesting after-dinner speech delivered by my host, a banker, a young and brilliant man, in the presence of leading business men at a dinner given in my honor at the Chicago Club. I shall never forget that speech, so enthusiastic was the speaker, and so delighted at having been shown his America in the long-ago life of Rome. In answering him I had to say that, as everything in Chicago is the greatest in the world, it was in Chicago that I had found my greatest admirer in the world!

However, it is North America alone that resembles ancient Rome. South America, or at least the South America which I know, — Brazil and the Argentine Republic, — does not. Those states represent, rather, the continuation and the development of the old European civilization, which is something quite different and opposed to it. In those states, extravagance occupies the high social rank that it does in Europe. The rich make a show of it, the people admire it, religion does not seek to restrain it, art and manufactures thrive upon it, the traditions of the past, as well as the tendencies of the present, favor it in every way according to the means that each has at its disposal. This difference of origin and development between the two Americas is more important than is generally supposed, and an understanding of its importance may be greatly helped forward by a study of Roman history.

MEDICAL EXPERIMENTATION ON ANIMALS

BY FREDERICK L. WACHENHEIM

I

MODERN medicine depends so largely upon animal experimentation, that, without it, the healing art would still remain a mere mixture of empiricism and superstition, as is the case in China to-day. Both the moral and legal codes forbid experimentation on human beings without their own consent; and as the results obtained from cold-blooded animals are commonly inapplicable to ourselves we are obliged to conduct our researches on the bodies of our nearest relatives, — the warm-blooded lower animals. The ancients derived much of their medical knowledge from this source: we find the great Galen conducting extensive and profitable researches on apes and dogs. In the Middle Ages, however, the deadening influence of scholasticism discouraged animal experimentation; we are therefore not surprised to learn that for over a thousand years medicine stood still.

With the great intellectual awakening that characterized the so-called Renaissance, the teachings of the ancients were felt to be insufficient. Vesalius and others studied the structure of the human body as thoroughly as the prejudices of the time permitted; progress in the science of physiology began; surgery threw off its old association with the barber's trade. In the seventeenth century, the invention of the microscope led to the assiduous study of our more minute structure. Nevertheless, if investigators had limited themselves exclusively to the con-

sideration of the human body, alive and dead, healthy and diseased, the science and practice of medicine could not have continued to advance. This limitation restricts us too closely to actual conditions; it excludes all such as are hypothetical or artificial. The voluntary submission of a human subject for medical experimentation is rarely obtainable, though a number of physicians, from grand old John Hunter to our own brave Lazear, have offered their persons and risked their lives in the interests of medical science. Such instances of noble self-devotion are infrequent, and should remain so; they are justified only by the direst necessity. It is indefensible to experiment upon men, when information equally, or almost equally, worthy of confidence can be derived from the lower animals.

The appreciation of this rather elementary moral principle has led to the marvelous progress in medicine that is one of the triumphs of our age. I would not pretend that the science and practice of medicine — two very different things, by the way — are anywhere near perfection; but it is true that the greater part of the physical ills of humanity are to-day under the physician's control, while only a very few remain altogether beyond our reach. Indeed, Metchnikoff, one of the ablest investigators on animals, thinks that there is a prospect of a fairly successful fight to defer the approach of man's greatest enemy, old age.

Cruelty to animals is abhorrent to modern civilization; it lowers man to