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SCIENCE PROPHESES THE FUTURE OF THE RACE.

M. Alphonse de Candolles is to be credited with the strikingly original idea of applying the principle of the Darwinian theory to determine, not the past, but the future of the human race. That principle he defines as "the forced adaptation of organized beings to surrounding circumstances of every kind, the result of which is that the modifications preserved are sometimes good, sometimes bad, that is, according to our human conception of what is good or bad."

The argument presented is based on these premises; first, that organized beings endowed with will and the faculty of locomotion always seek to adapt themselves to their environment, and none do so more effectually than man, because of his superior intelligence. Secondly, that those individuals least able thus to accommodate themselves are most likely to perish, and hence populations are principally recruited by individuals that possess the qualities best adapted to the circumstances of the country and the age in which they live.

Thirdly, that the violent contests between nations and individuals accelerate modifications and adaptations to new circumstances. It will be evident that, in considering the subject, two possible conditions of the race at once present themselves, or rather two questions are before us to answer: What will be the state of mankind one thousand years hence, during which period it is reasonably certain that the physical conditions which affect the species will remain stable? And what will be the state of mankind several hundred thousand years in the future, when vast cosmical changes may possibly have occurred? The period of one thousand years is an extremely short one in the earth's history. We have historic documents dating even further back; and since their origin, no material change in climate has taken place, nor have the configurations of the globe altered.

Before the far more remote period designated in the second question shall arrive, great changes may, as we have already intimated, occur. The entire habitable surface of the globe may be altered by the depressions and elevations of its surface, constantly, though slowly, in progress. New diseases may sweep off whole nations, or the race itself. The accumulation of ice at the poles may produce changes in winds, in currents, eventually in climate; and another glacial period may supervene, the effect of which would be to drive all organized beings toward the equator; and this change in habitation would result in the extinction of many species.

Through the oxidizing action of the air and by human labor, the quantity of metals and coal on the surface of the earth is constantly being diminished. Undoubtedly as this occurs, new ways of working mines to great depth and of utilizing natural metallic oxides will be discovered; but these resources can never be so advantageous as those we now enjoy. As they become rare, so will population diminish and industries decrease; and this result will be the more marked in countries depending upon such resources. We know that the terrestrial surface is constantly diminishing, and elevated regions are being lowered through the incessant action of water, ice, and air.

the races will congregate in masses on smaller areas of terrestrial surface. This concentration will be enforced by other causes, as, combustibles and metals being scarce, intercommunication will be difficult; through the depression of mountain chains diminishing the condensation of aqueous vapors, now fertile countries will become sterile, and populations will accordingly diminish. Then, as the continents deprived of mountains become partial deserts or archipelagoes, the people will become more and more maritime. They will draw their sustenance from the sea, which will form a barrier to the mingling of races. The whites who will avoid equatorial regions will suffer most from ice invasions from the poles; and the colored races in the central archipelagoes, remaining pure as at present, on account of natural selection during their long isolation, will probably be the survivors of the race.

To recapitulate, M. de Candolles believes that our period and that which will follow for the next thousand years will be characterized by a great increase in population, a mingling of races, and a prosperity more or less marked. Then will probably follow a long period of diminution of population, of separation of the peoples, and of decadence.

A GOOD POLICY.

A very handsome compliment has just been paid to the United States by the Secretary of the Geological Society of Edinburgh, Scotland. Writing under date of January 20, to announce the election of Professor F. V. Hayden as Foreign Corresponding Fellow, the secretary justifies the defence of American science by Dr. Draper (see SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN, page 360, vol. xxxv.) and says: "I am glad to take this opportunity of stating that, in the opinion of myself and my scientific friends in this city, no government in the world equals that of the United States in the liberality, importance, and, I may add, magnificence of its donations to scientific societies throughout the civilized globe. Beside it the liberality of the British Government, even to British societies, sinks into insignificance."

This is as it should be. It is the very best policy of a government like ours to favor Science in every legitimate way. As a people, our indebtedness to Science at home and abroad is simply immeasurable. It has furnished the true basis of our national culture. It has made our agriculture what it is—the source of national wealth and strength. It has enabled us to become the great manufacturing country of the world, and has done more to further the speedy development of our mineral and other material resources than any other agency. We do well therefore to deal liberally with Science at home and to be lavish rather than niggardly in distributing abroad the results of our scientific surveys and experimental investigations.

This policy is particularly worthy of encouragement at this present time. Hitherto no effort has been spared to aid and encourage emigration: with what success and profit may be seen in our rapid increase in wealth and population, and in the rapid conquest of vast areas lately a wilderness, now overspread by fertile farms, dotted with thrifty towns and rising cities, knit together by railways and telegraph lines. The time has come, however, when our need is not so much empty handed emigrants, however stout and willing to work, as men of a higher intellectual and financial grade, men with capital to invest, men capable of taking a more important part in the discovery and development of our material resources. The old world is full of men of this sort, who are on the outlook for opportunities for the exercise of their talents. There is no better way to reach such men, and give them a favorable impression of our country and people, than to be well represented at all the local centers of activity and culture. Our government publications are replete with matter of great interest and value; and it is a wise policy which secures their distribution among the libraries of the world, particularly among those of the scientific societies. There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth: and the converse is equally true, as the same ancient experience discovered. There is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.

It is to be hoped that the ostentatious economy (?) that broke out in Washington awhile ago will pass away before this relatively inexpensive yet profitable policy, in dealing with Science at home and abroad, is completely reversed.

PROTECTION OF BUILDINGS FROM LIGHTNING.

Under this head, the English journals publish an abstract of a paper by Professor J. Clerk-Maxwell, which is likely, on account of the high reputation of its author as a scientist, to disturb the minds of many who have no very clear conception of the nature of electricity. The Professor states first that it appears to him that the extension of a lightning conductor above the highest part of a building, connected at its lower extremity with conducting strata underground, and thus tapping the electricity, is calculated rather to protect the surrounding country, and to relieve the clouds, than to protect the building.

This idea is in direct conflict with experience, which has taught us that buildings protected by well constructed lightning rods are never damaged, but that the surrounding buildings have often been struck; and hence we have the well established maxim that the protecting influence of a lightning rod extends around it in a radius of 50, 100, 150, or more feet, according to the height of the rod, and other incidental circumstances sometimes difficult to define. Whenever a house provided with a lightning rod has been