

So point out that
idleness,
shiftlessness and
drunkenness



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So every question has two sides. Narrow-minded people can see only one side; and it takes a broad-minded man to see both. For example, take politics. In every country there are two great parties, which correspond to the Liberals and Conservatives in England, or the Progressives and Moderates in India. The Conservative wants to keep things as they are, because he fears that any change will do more harm than good; the Liberal stands for reform, change and progress.

Now both are in a way right. Because no social organisation is perfect, we must reform abuses, adopt better methods, and progress to better things. But very often it has happened (as in the French Revolution) that, if people are in too great a hurry to make progress, they destroy many good institutions with the bad, and even wreck the whole constitution. But narrow-minded politicians of different views do not see this; and so, each seeing only his side of the question, they fight.

Consider the different ways in which different people will look at a social problem say, poverty. Some will say that poverty is entirely due to idleness, shiftlessness and strong drink. Let the poor work and save and keep sober, and there will be no more poverty. Other people will point out that idleness, shiftlessness and drunkenness are themselves the result of the wretched circumstances in which the poor are brought up. A child born in a dirty town-slum, brought up in crowded hovel, breathing smoke and foul air, half starved, and with no proper schooling, naturally grows up to be a worthless idler and drunkard.

Change his surroundings, and he will be an honest, industrious and sober man. So one party says, Change the man and he will change his surroundings : and the other says, Change the Surroundings and you will change the man. And then they quarrel and fight.

Yet both are right; each sees one side of the question, but only one. A wise and broad-minded reformer will see both, and work both for individual and for social reform.