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OF

PSYCHOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY.

I.—THE ESSENCE OF REVENGE.[1]

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IN his remarkable work, *Ethnologische Studien zur ersten Entwicklung der Strafe*, Dr. S. R. Steinmetz has made the feeling of revenge the object of an investigation which seems to deserve more attention than has hitherto been bestowed upon it by psychologists. Not only do his *Studien* contain one of the very few attempts ever made by a specialist to elucidate a general psychical phenomenon by means of ethnological facts; but the problem he discusses is of wide-extending importance, bearing, as it does, not only directly upon the question of revenge, but, also, indirectly upon the explanation of the most prominent element in the moral consciousness. It will be the object of the present article to take up this problem afresh, not indeed to give anything like a general psychology of revenge, still less to deal with it as a social phenomenon, but to survey what the available facts really seem to teach us regarding its essence.

The ultimate conclusions at which Dr. Steinmetz has arrived are these: Revenge is essentially rooted in the feeling of power and superiority. It arises consequently upon the experience of injury, and its aim is to enhance the "self-feeling" which has been lowered or degraded by the injury suffered. It answers this purpose best if it is directed against the aggressor himself, but it is not essential to it that it should take any determinate direction, for, *per se* and originally, it is "undirected" and unlimited.

Strictly speaking, this theory is not new. At least Dr.

[1] Read before the Aristotelian Society.

Paul Rée, in his book, *Die Entstehung des Gewissens*, has pronounced revenge to be a reaction against the feeling of inferiority which the aggressor impresses upon his victim. The injured man, he says, is naturally reluctant to feel himself inferior to another man, and consequently strives, by avenging the aggression, to show himself equal or even superior to the aggressor.[1] But Dr. Steinmetz has elaborated this theory with an independence and a fulness which make any question of priority quite insignificant.

The first stage, he says, through which revenge passed within the human race was characterised by a total, or almost total, want of discrimination. The aim of the offended man was merely to raise his injured "self-feeling" by inflicting pain upon somebody else, and his savage desire was satisfied whether the man on whom he wreaked his wrath was guilty or innocent.[2] No doubt, there were from the outset instances in which the offender himself was purposely made the victim, especially if he was a fellow-tribesman; but it was not really due to the feeling of revenge if the punishment was inflicted upon him, in preference to others. Even primitive man must have found out that vengeance directed against the actual culprit, besides being a strong deterrent to others, was a capital means of making a dangerous person harmless. However, Dr. Steinmetz adds, these advantages should not be overestimated, as even the indiscriminate revenge has a deterring influence on the malefactor.[3] In early times, then, vengeance, according to Dr. Steinmetz, was in the main "undirected".

At the next stage it becomes, he says, somewhat less indiscriminate. A proper victim is sought for even in cases of what we should call natural death, which the savage generally attributes to the ill-will of some foe skilled in sorcery;[4] though indeed Dr. Steinmetz doubts whether in such cases the unfortunate sufferer is really supposed to have committed the deed imputed to him.[5] At all events, a need is felt of choosing somebody for a victim, and "undirected" vengeance gradually gives way to "directed" vengeance. A rude specimen of this is the blood-feud, in which the individual culprit is left out of consideration, but war is carried on against the group of which he is a member, either his

[1] Rée, *Die Entstehung des Gewissens*, § 14, p. 40.

[2] Steinmetz, *Ethnologische Studien zur ersten Entwicklung der Strafe* (Leiden, 1894), vol. i., pp. 355, 356, 359, 361.

[3] *Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 362.

[4] *Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 356 *sq.*

[5] *Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 359 *sq.*

family or his tribe. And from this system of joint responsibility we finally come, by slow degrees, says Dr. Steinmetz, to the modern conception, according to which punishment should be inflicted upon the criminal and nobody else.[1] Dr. Steinmetz believes that the *vis agens* in this long process of evolution lies in the intellectual development of the human race: man found out more and more distinctly that the best means of restraining wrongs was to punish a certain person, *viz.*, the wrong-doer.[2] On this utilitarian calculation our author lays much stress in the latter part of his investigation; whereas in another place he observes that a revenge which is directed against the offender is particularly apt to remove the feeling of inferiority, by effectually humiliating the hitherto triumphant foe.[3]

In this historical account the main points of interest are the initial stage of "undirected" vengeance, and the way in which such vengeance gradually became discriminate. If, in primitive times, a man did not care in the least on whom he retaliated an injury, then of course the direction of his vengeance could not be essential to the revenge itself, but would be merely a later appendix to it. Now the question is, what evidence can Dr. Steinmetz adduce to support his theory? Of primitive man we have no direct experience; no savage people now existing is a faithful representative of him, either physically or mentally. Yet however greatly the human race has changed, primitive man is not altogether dead. Traits of his character still linger in his descendants; and of primitive revenge, we are told, there are sufficient survivals left.[4]

Under the heading "Perfectly Undirected Revenge," Dr. Steinmetz sets out several alleged cases of such so-called survivals.[5] 1. An Indian of the Omaha tribe, who was kicked out of a trading establishment which he had been forbidden to enter, declared in a rage that he would revenge himself for an injury so gross, and, "seeking some object to destroy, he encountered a sow and pigs, and appeased his rage by putting them all to death". 2. The people of that same tribe believe that if a man who has been struck by lightning is not buried in the proper way, and in the place where he has been killed, his spirit will not rest in peace, but will walk about till another person is slain by lightning and laid beside him. 3. At the burial of a Loucheux Indian, the

[1] Steinmetz, *Ethnologische Studien zur ersten Entwicklung der Strafe* (Leiden, 1894), vol. i., p. 361.

[2] *Ibid.*, vol. i., pp. 358, 359, 361 *sq.*

[3] *Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 111.

[4] *Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 364.

[5] *Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 318 *sqq.*

relatives sometimes will cut and lacerate their bodies, or, as sometimes happens, will, "in a fit of revenge against fate," stab some poor, friendless person who may be sojourning among them. 4. The Navajoes, when jealous of their wives, are apt to wreak their spleen and ill-will upon the first person whom they chance to meet. 5. The Great Eskimos, as it is reported, once after a severe epidemic, swore to kill all white people who might venture into their country. 6. The Australian father, whose little child happens to hurt itself, attacks his innocent neighbours, believing that he thus distributes the pain among them and consequently lessens the suffering of the child. 7. The Brazilian Tupis ate the vermin which molested them, for the sake of revenge; and if one of them struck his foot against a stone, he raged over it and bit it, whilst, if he were wounded with an arrow, he plucked it out and gnawed the shaft. 8. The Dacotahs avenge theft by stealing the property of the thief or of somebody else. 9. Among the Tshatrali (Pamir), if a man is robbed of his meat by a neighbour's dog, he will, in a fit of rage, not only kill the offending dog, but will, in addition, kick his own. 10. In New Guinea the bearers of evil tidings sometimes get knocked on the head during the first outburst of indignation evoked by their news. 11. Some natives of Motu, who had rescued two shipwrecked crews and safely brought them to their home in Port Moresby, were attacked there by the very friends of those they had saved, the reason for this being that the Port Moresby people were angry at the loss of the canoes, and could not bear that the Motuans were happy while they themselves were in trouble. 12. Another story from New Guinea tells us of a man who killed some innocent persons, because he had been disappointed in his plans and deprived of valuable property. 13. Among the Maoris it sometimes happened that the friends of a murdered man killed the first man who came in their way, whether enemy or friend. 14. Among the same people, chiefs who had suffered some loss often used to rob their subjects of property in order to make good the damage. 15. If the son of a Maori is hurt, his maternal relatives, to whose tribe he is considered to belong, come to pillage his father's house or village. 16. If a tree falls on a Kuki his fellows chop it up, and if one of that tribe kills himself by falling from a tree the tree from which he fell is promptly cut down. 17. In some parts of Daghestan, when the cause of a death is unknown, the relatives of the deceased declare some person chosen at random to have murdered him, and retaliate his death upon that person.

I have been obliged to enumerate all these cases for the reason that a theory cannot be satisfactorily refuted unless on its own ground. I may confess at once that I scarcely ever saw an hypothesis vindicated by the aid of more futile evidence. The cases 7 and 16 illustrate just the reverse of "undirected" revenge, and, when we take into consideration the animistic belief of savages, present little to astonish us. In case 17 the guilt is certainly imputed to somebody at random, but only when the culprit is unknown. Cases 1, 4, 10 and 12 and perhaps also 11, imply that revenge is taken upon an innocent party in a fit of passion;—in cases 1 and 12 the offender himself cannot be got at, in case 10 the man who is knocked on the head appears for the moment as the immediate cause of the grief or indignation evoked, while case 11 exhibits envy combined with extreme ingratitude. In case 9 the anger is chiefly directed against the "guilty" dog, and against the "innocent" one evidently by an association of ideas. Cases 8 and 14 illustrate indemnification for loss of property, and in case 8 the thief himself is specifically mentioned first. In case 15 the revenging attack is made upon the property of those people among whom the child lives, and who may be considered responsible for the loss its maternal clan sustains by the injury. Case 6 merely shows the attempt of a superstitious father to lessen the suffering of his child. As regards case 5, Petitot, who has recorded it, says expressly that the white people were supposed to have caused the epidemic by displeasing the god Tornrark.[1] Case 2 points to a superstitious belief which is interesting enough in itself, but which, so far as I can see, is without any bearing whatever on the point we are discussing. Case 3 looks like a death-offering. The stabbing of an innocent person is mentioned in connexion with, or rather as an alternative to, the self-laceration of the mourners, which last undoubtedly has a sacrificial character. Moreover, there is in this case no question of a culprit. In case 13, finally, the idea of sacrifice is very conspicuous. Dr. Steinmetz has borrowed his statement from Waitz, whose account is incomplete. Dieffenbach, the original authority, says that the custom in question was called by the Maori *taua tapu*, *i.e.*, sacred fight, or *taua toto*, *i.e.*, fight for blood. He describes it as follows: "If blood has been shed, a party sally forth and kill the first person they fall in with, whether an enemy or belonging to their own tribe; even a brother is sacrificed. If they do not fall

[1] Petitot, *Les Grands Esquimaux*, p. 207 *sq.*

in with anybody, the *tohunga* (that is, the priest) pulls up some grass, throws it into a river, and repeats some incantation. After this ceremony, the killing of a bird, or any living thing that comes in their way, is regarded as sufficient, provided that blood is actually shed. All who participate in such an excursion are *tapu*, and are not allowed either to smoke or to eat anything but indigenous food."[1]

There can be no doubt that this ceremony was undertaken in order to appease the enraged spirit of the dead.[2] The question, however, is, why was not his death avenged upon the actual culprit? To this Dr. Steinmetz would answer that the deceased was thought to be indiscriminate in his craving for vengeance.[3] The "sacred fight" of the Maori, however, only seems to illustrate the impulsive character of anger in connexion with a superstitious belief. From Dieffenbach's description of it, it is obvious that the relatives of the slain man considered it to be a matter of paramount importance that blood should be shed immediately. If no human being came in their way, an animal was killed. This, I think, we may explain without difficulty, if we consider the terror which the supposed wrath of the dead man's spirit undoubtedly struck into the living. The Maoris, according to the Rev. R. Taylor, considered all spirits of the dead to be maliciously inclined towards them,[4] and the ghost of a person who had died a violent death was certainly looked upon as especially dangerous. The craving for instantaneous expiation is even more conspicuous in another case which may be appropriately mentioned in this connexion. The Aëtas of the Philippine Islands, we are told, "do not always wait for the death of the afflicted before they bury him. Immediately after the body has been deposited in the grave, it becomes necessary, according to their usages, that his death should be avenged. The hunters of the tribe go out with their lances and arrows to kill the first living creature they meet with, whether a man, a stag, a wild hog, or a buffalo."[5]

Dr. Steinmetz himself quotes, in support of his theory, some other instances from the same group of islands, in which, when a man dies, his nearest kinsmen go out to requite his death by the death of the first man who comes in

[1] Dieffenbach, *Travels in New Zealand*, vol. ii., p. 127.
[2] *Cf. ibid.*, vol. ii., p. 129.
[3] *Cf.* Steinmetz, *loc. cit.*, vol. i., p. 343.
[4] Taylor, *Te Ika a Maui* (1870), p. 221.
[5] Earl, *Papuans*, p. 132.

their way. He also refers to some statements concerning various Australian tribes, according to which the relatives of a deceased person kill some innocent man, evidently in order to appease his spirit, and perhaps, also, to a certain extent, from a feeling of revenge on their own account.[1] But all these statements prove nothing of what they are intended to prove. In every case the avenged death is "natural" according to our terminology, and caused by sorcery in the belief of the savages. Moreover, the Philippine Islanders are known to have the very worst opinion of their ghosts, who are supposed to be particularly blood-thirsty soon after death;[2] and the Australian natives very commonly tie up the limbs of the dead bodies, in order to prevent the deceased from coming out of the tomb to injure the survivors.[3]

To sum up: all the facts Dr. Steinmetz has adduced as evidence for his hypothesis of an original stage of "undirected" revenge only show, that in certain circumstances, either in a fit of passion, or when the actual offender is unknown or out of reach, revenge may be taken on an innocent being, wholly unconnected with the inflicter of the injury it is sought to revenge. Now this, as everybody knows, may happen not only among savages, but in the midst of the highest civilisation. Among ourselves it is by no means unusual that an enraged person wreaks his wrath upon people who have done him no harm whatsoever, and that an official who has been humiliated by his superior retaliates on those under him. But this can hardly be called revenge in the true sense of the word; it is sudden anger, or it is the outburst of a wounded "self-feeling," which, when not directed against its proper object, can afford only an inadequate consolation to a revengeful man. Nevertheless, although Dr. Steinmetz's facts disclose no new point in the psychology of revenge, they give us an interesting lesson with reference to another feeling, *viz.*, sympathy. Several of Dr. Steinmetz's cases record not sporadic and occasional outbursts of revengeful feeling, but established and recognised customs, and show to what an extreme the sufferings of innocent people are disregarded among many savage races.

Not only has Dr. Steinmetz failed to prove his hypothesis,

[1] Steinmetz, *loc. cit.*, p. 335 *sqq.*

[2] Blumentritt, "Der Ahnencultus und die religiösen Anschauungen der Malaien des Philippinen-Archipels," in *Mittheil. der Geogr. Gesellsch. in Wien*, vol. xxv., p. 166 *sqq.* De Mas, *Informe sobre el estado de las Islas Filipinas en* 1842, *Orijen*, etc., p. 15.

[3] Curr, *The Australian Race*, vol. i., pp. 44, 87.

but, as far as I can see, this hypothesis is quite opposed to all the most probable ideas we can form with regard to the revenge of early man. For my own part I am convinced that we may obtain a good deal of knowledge about the primitive condition of the human race, but certainly not by studying modern savages only. I have dealt with this question at some length in another place,[1] and wish now merely to point out that those general physical and psychical qualities which are not only common to all races of mankind, but which are shared by them with the animals most allied to man, may be assumed to have been present also in the earlier stages of human development. Now, concerning revenge among animals, more especially among monkeys, many anecdotes have been told by trustworthy authorities. On the authority of a zoologist "whose scrupulous accuracy was known to many persons," Mr. Darwin relates the following story: "At the Cape of Good Hope an officer had often plagued a certain baboon, and the animal, seeing him approaching one Sunday for parade, poured water into a hole and hastily made some thick mud, which he skilfully dashed over the officer as he passed by, to the amusement of many bystanders. For long afterwards the baboon rejoiced and triumphed whenever he saw his victim."[2] Prof. Romanes considers this to be a good instance of "what may be called brooding resentment deliberately preparing a satisfactory revenge".[3] This, I think, is to put into the statement somewhat more than it really contains; but at all events it records a case of revenge, in the sense in which Dr. Steinmetz uses the word. The same may be said of other instances mentioned by so accurate observers as Brehm and Rengger in their descriptions of African and American monkeys.[4] I find it inconceivable that anybody, in the face of such facts, could still believe that the revenge of early man was at first

[1] *The History of Human Marriage*, p. 3 *sqq.*

[2] Darwin, *The Descent of Man* (1890), p. 69.

[3] Romanes, *Animal Intelligence*, p. 478.

[4] Brehm, *Thierleben* (1880), vol. i., p. 156. Rengger (*Naturgeschichte der Säugethiere von Paraguay*, p. 52) gives the following information about the Cay: "Fürchet er . . . seinen Gegner, so nimmt er seine Zuflucht zur Verstellung, und sucht sich erst dann am ihm zu rächen, wenn er ihn unvermuthet überfallen kann. So hatte ich einen Cay, welcher mehrere Personen, die ihn oft auf eine grobe Art geneckt hatten, in einem Augenblicke biss, wo sie im besten Vernehmen mit ihm zu sein glaubten. Nach verübter That kletterte er schnell auf einen hohen Balken, wo man ihm nicht beikommen konnte, und grinste schadenfroh den Gegenstand seiner Rache an."

essentially undiscriminating, and became gradually discriminating merely from considerations of social expediency.

As a matter of fact, revenge only forms one link in that chain of mental phenomena, for which resentment is, perhaps, the most appropriate general name.[1] The word revenge generally implies undue severity, but when we use it as a psychological term to denote a mental state, the moral character of which appears in a very different light to different peoples, it seems advisable to strip it of all ethical qualification and to make it synonymous with deliberate resentment. It would thus represent the more intellectual form of resentment, in which the connexion between the pain inflicted and the volitional reaction is interrupted by a consideration of attendant circumstances, whereas in sudden resentment or anger the reaction takes place almost instantaneously. But it is of course impossible to draw any distinct limit between these two types, and, though brooding revenge is probably restricted to man, the cases of resentment among monkeys, quoted above, certainly indicate a certain amount of deliberation. Nor is it possible exactly to discern where an actual intention to inflict pain comes in. In its primitive form anger contains a vehement volition to remove the cause of pain, but undoubtedly it contains no real desire to produce suffering.[2] Anger is strikingly shown by many fish, and notoriously by sticklebacks when their territory is invaded by other sticklebacks. In such circumstances of provocation the whole animal changes colour, and, darting at the trespasser, shows rage and fury in every movement,[3] but, of course, we cannot believe that any idea of inflicting pain is present to its mind. As we proceed still lower down the scale of animal life, we find the volitional element itself gradually dwindle away until nothing is left but mere reflex action.

In this long chain there is no missing link. Protective reflex action, anger without intention to cause suffering, anger with such an intention, more deliberate resentment or revenge—all these phenomena are so inseparably connected with each other that no one can say where one passes into another. The common characteristic of these phenomena is this, that they are means of protection for the animal, and, if the involuntary reflex action be excluded, we may add the

[1] *Cf.* Fowler, *The Principles of Morals* (1887), vol. ii., p. 105.

[2] There are some good remarks on this in Mr. Hiram Stanley's *Studies in the Evolutionary Psychology of Feeling*, p. 138 *sq.*

[3] Romanes, *loc. cit.*, p. 246 *sq.*

further characteristic that they are mental states marked by a hostile attitude towards the cause of pain. They are useful instincts, which, like other useful instincts, have been acquired by means of natural selection in the struggle for existence.

Two different attitudes may be taken by an animal towards another which has made it feel pain: it may either shun or attack its enemy. In the former case its action is prompted by fear, in the latter by anger; and it depends on the circumstances which of these feelings is the actual determinant. Both of them are of supreme importance for the preservation of the species, and may consequently be regarded as elements in the animal's mental constitution which admit of no further explanation than that derived from their usefulness. We have already seen that the instinct of attacking the enemy could not originally have been guided by a representation of the enemy as suffering. As, however, a successful attack is necessarily accompanied by such suffering, the desire to produce it naturally, with the increase of intelligence, entered as an important element in resentment. The need for protection thus lies at the foundation of resentment in all its forms.

This view, as everybody knows, has by no means the attraction of being new. More than one hundred and fifty years before Darwin, Shaftesbury wrote of resentment in these words: "Notwithstanding its immediate aim be indeed the ill or punishment of another, yet it is plainly of the sort of those [passions] which tend to the advantage and interest of the self-system, the animal himself; and is withal in other respects contributing to the good and interest of the species".[1] A similar opinion is expressed by Butler, according to whom the reason and end for which man was made liable to anger is, that he might be better qualified to prevent and resist violence and opposition, while deliberate resentment "is to be considered as a weapon, put into our hands by nature, against injury, injustice, and cruelty".[2] Adam Smith, also, believes that resentment has "been given us by nature for defence, and for defence only," as being "the safeguard of justice and the security of innocence".[3] Exactly the same view is taken by several modern evolutionists as regards the "end" of resentment, though they, of course, do not rest contented with saying that this feeling has been given us by

[1] Shaftesbury, *An Inquiry Concerning Virtue or Merit* (1699), book ii., pt. ii., sect. ii.

[2] Butler, *Sermon VIII.—Upon Resentment.*

[3] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, pt. ii., sect. ii., ch. i.

nature, but try to explain in what way it has developed. "Among members of the same species," says Mr. Herbert Spencer, "those individuals which have not, in any considerable degree, resented aggressions, must have ever tended to disappear, and to have left behind those which have with some effect made counter-aggressions."[1] Mr. Hiram Stanley, too, quoting Junker's statement regarding the pigmies of Africa, that "they are much feared for their revengeful spirit," observes that "other things being equal, the most revengeful are the most successful in the struggle for self-conservation and self-furtherance".[2] This evolutionist theory of revenge has been criticised by Dr. Steinmetz, but in my opinion with no success. He remarks that the *feeling* of revenge could not have been of any use to the animal, even though the *act* of vengeance might have been useful.[3] But this way of reasoning, according to which the whole mental life would be excluded from the influence of natural selection, is based on a false conception of the relation between mind and body, and, ultimately, on a wrong idea of cause and effect.

While rejecting Dr. Steinmetz's hypothesis as regards the nature of revenge, I by no means deny that a violation of the "self-feeling" is an extremely common and powerful incentive to resentment. Nothing more easily rouses in us anger and a desire for retaliation, nothing is more difficult to forgive, than an act which indicates contempt, or disregard of our feelings. Long after the bodily pain of a blow has ceased, the mental suffering caused by the insult survives and calls for vengeance. I find, however, no need to resort to different principles in order to explain the resentment excited by these different kinds of pain. In all cases revenge implies, primordially and essentially, a desire to cause pain or destruction in return for hurt suffered, whether the hurt be bodily or mental; and if, as is often the case, to this desire is added the intention to enhance the wounded "self-feeling" this does not interfere with the true nature of the primary feeling of revenge. That Dr. Steinmetz's explanation cannot be correct seems to me evident from the following facts, among others. On the one hand, we have genuine specimens of resentment without the co-operation of self-regarding pride;[4] stupidity, for instance, has a decided tendency to provoke

[1] Spencer, *The Principles of Ethics*, vol. i., p. 361 *sq.*

[2] Hiram Stanley, *loc. cit.*, p. 180. *Cf.* also Guyau, *Esquisse d'une Morale sans obligation ni sanction*, p. 162 *sq.*

[3] Steinmetz, *loc. cit.*, vol. i., p. 135.

[4] *Cf.* Bain, *The Emotions and the Will* (1880), p. 177.

anger. On the other hand, the action of self-regarding pride may be totally free from malice. If a man has written a bad book which is severely criticised, he may desire to repair his reputation by writing a better book, not by humiliating his critics; and if he attempts the latter rather than the former, he does so, not merely in order to enhance his "self-feeling," but because he is driven on by revenge.

In the feeling of gratification which results from successful resentment the pleasure of power also may form a very important element, but it is never the exclusive element. As the satisfaction of every desire is accompanied by pleasure, so the satisfaction of the desire involved in resentment gives a pleasure by itself. The angry or revengeful man who succeeds in what he aims at, delights in the pain he inflicts for the very reason that he desired to inflict it.

We have already noticed several facts which show that, in cases where the actual offender, at least for the moment, cannot be got at, or where some other feeling, especially fear, prohibits the sufferer from attacking him, resentment may be directed against some individual who is not even supposed to have inflicted the injury resented. These cases, however, which may be easily multiplied by every-day observation among ourselves, by no means vitiate the conclusion that resentment, as a means of defence or protection, is essentially directed against the being that caused the suffering which we resent. They only show the intimate connexion that exists between the experience of injury and the hostile reaction by which the injured individual gives vent to his passion, and which does not fail to appear even when it misses its aim.

That the fury of an injured animal turns against the real or assumed cause of its injury is a matter of notoriety, and everybody knows that the same is the case with the anger of a child. No doubt, as Prof. Sully observes, "hitting out right and left, throwing things down on the floor and breaking them, howling, wild agitated movements of the arms and whole body, these are the outward vents which the gust of childish fury is apt to take".[1] On the other hand, we know well enough that Mr. Darwin's little boy, who became a great adept at throwing books and sticks at any one who offended him,[2] was in this respect no exceptional child. That a similar discrimination characterises the resentment of a savage is a fact upon which it would be unnecessary to

[1] Sully, *Studies of Childhood*, p. 232 *sq.*

[2] Darwin, "A Biographical sketch of an Infant," in MIND, vol. ii., p. 288.

dwell unless there were some seeming anomalies that require an explanation.

It has been sufficiently proved that the blood-feud is an extremely wide-spread institution among peoples living on a low stage of social development. In this institution some sort of collective responsibility is always involved. If the offender is of another family than his victim, but of the same clan or tribe, some of his relatives may have to expiate his deed. If he belongs to another clan, the whole clan may be held responsible for it;[1] and if he is of another tribe, the vengeance may be wreaked upon his fellow-tribesmen indiscriminately. There is no difficulty, however, in explaining these facts. The following statement made by Mr. Romilly with reference to the Solomon Islanders has, undoubtedly, a much wider application: "In the cases which call for punishment, the difficulties in the way of capturing the actual culprits are greater than any one, who has not been engaged in this disagreeable work, can imagine".[2] Though it may happen occasionally that a manslayer is abandoned by his own people,[3] the general rule is, not only that all the members of a group are engaged, more or less effectually, in the act of revenge, but that they mutually protect each other against the avengers. A murder very often provokes a war,[4] in which family stands against family, clan against clan, or tribe against tribe. In such cases the whole group take upon themselves the deed of the perpetrator, and any of his fellows, because standing up for him, becomes a proper object of revenge. The guilt extends itself, as it were, in the eyes of the offended party. Moreover, because of the close relationship which exists between the members of the same group, the actual culprit will be mortified by any successful attack that the avengers make on his people, and, if he be dead, its

[1] Dr. Steinmetz says (*loc. cit.*, vol. i., p. 381) that he has found no instance of a blood-feud taking place between clans. My statement in the text is based on Bridge's account of the Fuegians in *A Voice for South America*, vol. xiii., p. 207; on Ridley's account of the Australian Kamilaroi in *Jour. Anthr. Inst.*, vol. ii., p. 268, and Godwin Austen's account of the Gāro Hill tribes of India, *ibid.*, vol. ii., p. 394.

[2] Romilly, *The Western Pacific and New Guinea*, p. 81. *Cf.* Friedrichs, "Mensch und Person," in *Das Ausland*, 1891, p. 299.

[3] *Cf.* Crantz, *The History of Greenland*, vol. i., p. 178.

[4] Dr. Post's statement (*Die Geschlechtsgenossenschaft der Urzeit*, p. 156) that the blood-revenge "charakterisirt sich . . . ganz und gar als ein Privatkrieg zwischen zwei Geschlechtsgenossenschaften," is not quite correct in this unqualified form, as may be seen, *e.g.*, from v. Martius's description of the blood-revenge of the Brazilian Indians, in his *Beiträge zur Ethnographie Amerika's*, vol. i., pp. 127-129.

painful and humiliating effects are still supposed to reach his spirit.

In spite of all this, however, the strong tendency to discrimination which characterises resentment, is not wholly lost even behind the veil of common responsibility. Thus Mr. Howitt has come to the conclusion that, among the Australian Kurnai, if homicide has been committed by an alien tribe, the feud "cannot be satisfied but by the death of the offender," although it is carried on, not against him alone, but against the whole group of which he is a member.[1] Concerning the West Australians, Sir George Grey observes: "The first great principle with regard to punishments is, that all the relations of a culprit, in the event of his not being found, are implicated in his guilt; if, therefore, the principal cannot be caught, his brother or father will answer nearly as well, and, failing these, any other male or female relative, who may fall into the hands of the avenging party".[2] In Wetter, according to Riedel, the malefactor is first sought after, and only if he cannot be found out is revenge taken on some other member of his *negari*.[3] Among the Fuegians, as we are told by M. Hyades, the most serious riots take place when a manslayer, whom one wishes to punish, takes refuge with his relations or friends.[4] Von Martius remarks of the Brazilian Indians in general, that, even when an intertribal war ensues from the committing of homicide, the nearest relations of the killed person endeavour, if possible, to destroy the culprit himself and his family.[5] Among the Guiana Indians, according to Mr. Brett, "if the supposed offender cannot be slain, some innocent member of his family—man, woman, or little child—must suffer instead".[6] With reference to the Creek Indians, Mr. Hawkins says that though, if a murderer flies and cannot be caught, they will take revenge upon some innocent individual belonging to the family of the murderer, they are, on the other hand, "generally earnest of themselves, in their endeavours to put the guilty to death".[7]

It is quite possible that much more to the same effect

[1] Fison and Howitt, *Kamilaroi and Kurnai*, p. 221.

[2] Grey, *Journals of Expeditions*, vol. ii., p. 239.

[3] Riedel, *De sluik en kroesharige rassen tusschen Selebes en Papua*, p. 434.

[4] Hyades and Deniker, *Mission scientifique du Cap Horn*, vol. vii., p. 375.

[5] Von Martius, *loc. cit.*, vol. i., p. 128.

[6] Brett, *The Indian Tribes of Guiana*, p. 357.

[7] Hawkins, in *Trans. American Ethn. Soc.*, vol. iii., p. 67. *Cf.* also Dall, *Alaska*, p. 416; Chalmers, *Pioneering in New Guinea*, p. 179.

might have been discovered, had only the observers of savage life paid more attention to this particular aspect of the matter. At all events, the most interesting point connected with the blood-feud is, not that the culprit himself often escapes so easily, but that, here again, the sufferings of innocent individuals are so utterly disregarded. It is in this point that a change of the utmost importance has taken place during the course of evolution. Can anything be more revolting to our feelings of justice, than the vengeance of the Californian Nishinam, who "consider that the keenest and most bitter revenge which a man can take is, not to slay the murderer himself, but his dearest friend"?[1] How contradictory to all our moral ideas, too, are the following facts. If, among the Marea, a commoner is killed by a nobleman, his death is not avenged directly on the slayer, but on some commoner who is subservient to him.[2] If, again, among the Quianganes of Luzon, a noble is killed by a plebeian, another nobleman, of the kin of the murderer, must be slain, while the murderer himself is ignored.[3] If, among the Igorrotes, a man kills a woman of another house, her nearest kinsman endeavours to kill a woman belonging to the household of the homicide, but to the guilty man himself he does nothing.[4] In all these cases the culprit is not lost sight of; vengeance is invariably wreaked upon somebody connected with him. But any consideration of the innocence of the victim is overshadowed by the blind subordination to that powerful rule which requires strict equivalence between injury and punishment—an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,—and which, when strained to the utmost, cannot allow the life of a man to be sacrificed for that of a woman, or the life of a nobleman to be sacrificed for that of a commoner, or the life of a commoner to expiate the death of a noble.

A similar rule of equivalence, more or less rigidly enforced, not unusually regulates the practice of retaliation. Now it demands that only one life should be taken for one; now that a death should be avenged on a person of the same rank, sex, or age, as the deceased; now that a murderer should die in the same manner as his victim; now that various kinds of injuries should be retaliated by the infliction

[1] Powers, *Tribes of California*, p. 320.

[2] Munzinger, *Ostafrikanische Studien*, p. 243.

[3] Blumentritt, quoted by Spencer, *The Principles of Ethics*, vol. i., p. 370 *sq.*

[4] Jagor, *Travels in the Philippines*, p. 213.

of similar injuries on the offender. It may be well, for the right understanding of savage revenge, to give some further illustrations of this remarkable law. In Nukahiva, according to von Langsdorf, when a homicide has been committed, a family feud ensues, "but as soon as one is sacrificed, no matter whether man, woman, boy, or girl, the enmity ceases, and the most complete harmony is restored between the antagonists".[1] The Negrito and Igorrote tribes in the province of La Isabela, in the Philippine Islands, keep a regular *Dr.* and *Cr.* account of heads; and, strange to say, the same Igorrotes who requite the death of a kinsman by the death of some perfectly innocent individual, taken at random, are so very particular in this quasi-retaliation, that "for a dead man a man must be killed, for a woman a woman, for a child a child".[2] Again, in Abyssinia, if a man kill another, the murderer must be put to death by the nearest relatives of the deceased with precisely the same kind of weapon as that with which he killed his victim. Mr. Parkyns tells us to what a ridiculous extreme this principle is carried: A boy who had climbed a tree, happened to fall downright on the head of his little comrade standing below. The comrade died immediately, and the unlucky climber was in consequence sentenced to be killed in the same way as he had killed the other boy, that is, the dead boy's brother should climb the tree in his turn, and tumble down on the other's head till he killed him.[3] Other instances show that the law of equivalence does not refer merely to killing. Concerning the Indians of Guiana, Mr. Im Thurn states that, in theory, if not in practice, a complete system of tit-for-tat has saturated their minds, and that the smallest injury done by one Indian to another, even if unintentional, must be atoned by suffering a similar injury.[4]

We must not, however, believe that this strict equivalence is a characteristic of resentment as such;—in this point I agree with Dr. Steinmetz. There is undoubtedly a certain proportion between the pain-stimulus and the reaction; other things being equal, resentment increases in intensity along with the pain by which it is excited. The more a person feels offended the more intense (*ceteris paribus*) is his desire to retaliate the offence, and the more severe is the retaliation he seeks. Resentment, however, involves no accurate balanc-

[1] Von Langsdorf, *Voyages and Travels*, vol. i., p. 132.

[2] Foreman, *The Philippine Islands*, p. 213. Jagor, *loc. cit.*, p. 213.

[3] Parkyns, *Life in Abyssinia*, vol. ii., pp. 236-238.

[4] Im Thurn, *Among the Indians of Guiana*, p. 213 *sq.*

ing of suffering against suffering. Hence there may be a gross disproportion between the pain suffered and the counter-pain inflicted. Especially variable is the relation between the external action and the reaction, the exterior cause of resentment and the effect in which it issues. The same thing may call forth very different degrees of pain and resentment in different persons. The extremity to which anger may be driven in the bosom of a savage by an accident which appears to us as a trifle, is well instanced by the Patagonian cacique who, in a moment of passion, dashed his little three-year-old son with the utmost violence against the rocks, because he let fall a basket of eggs which the father had handed to him.[1] If, again, deliberate resentment is usually less excessive than sudden anger, it is so because there is time left not only for better estimating the extent of the hurt suffered, but also for other impulses to make themselves felt. Neither revenge nor sudden anger, however, stands in any naturally fixed relation to its cause. It may be sufficient to remember Hannibal who destroyed Himera and put to death 3000 male captives in revenge for his slain grandfather. Thus, while the direction of resentment against its cause belongs to its very nature, the exact demand of eye for eye and tooth for tooth does not. While some peoples are in the habit of taking only one life for one, others endeavour to destroy the whole family of the culprit.[2] While some only demand that the murderer shall die in the same manner as his victim, others seek to carry their revenge beyond death by mutilating the corpse of their slain enemy.[3] While some retaliate the various kinds of injuries by the infliction of similar injuries on the offender, others do not object to avenging even small injuries by death.[4] How, then, shall we explain the rule of equivalence, which regulates the revenge of some peoples, but which is not followed by others?

If this rule is not suggested by revenge itself, then of course it must be due to the influence of other factors which intermingle with this feeling and help, with it, to determine the action. One of these factors, I think, is self-regarding pride, which plays such an important part in the vengeance both of savage and civilised men, that it has, although mistakenly, been supposed to form the very essence of revenge. The

[1] King and Fitzoy, *Voyages of the* Adventure *and* Beagle, vol. ii., p. 130 *sq.*

[2] *E.g.*, the Brazilian Indians (von Martius, *loc. cit.*, vol. i., p. 128).

[3] *E.g.*, the Tasmanians (Calder, in *Jour. Anthr. Inst.*, vol. iii., p. 21).

[4] *E.g.*, the Timorese (Forbes, *A Naturalist's Wanderings in the Eastern Archipelago*, p. 473).

desire to pull down the humiliating arrogance of the aggressor naturally suggests the idea of paying him back in his own coin. Thus a kick is apt to call forth a counter-kick, a box on the ear a counter-box on the ear, a bad word another bad word in return, a destruction of property a counter-destruction of property. This similarity between action and reaction is undoubtedly due, at least to a great extent, to wounded pride, though it seems probable that the natural disposition to imitate, especially in cases of sudden anger, acts in the same direction. But besides this qualitative equivalence between injury and punishment, the *lex talionis* requires, in a rough way, quantitative equivalence. Now this demand cannot possibly have its origin in any of the factors just mentioned. The wounded "self-feeling" may easily claim that the punishment shall be at least equal in intensity to the insult, but at the same time it may lead to a retaliation far beyond that limit. Some other power, then, must have been at work when the law of like for like was established. Let us see what power it was.

It must be noticed that the strict rule of equivalence has the character of a custom, which, like all customs, is enforced by society. Revenge among savages is, indeed, not a matter of merely private concern; society is not a wholly indifferent bystander even when the offence committed is merely individual. Though the exaction of vengeance is generally described as a right belonging to the offended party or his group, there are facts, too numerous to quote, which show that, even among the lowest savages now existing, it is regarded as a social duty, and that an omission of it incurs general censure. Man is by nature both resentful and sympathetic. When he sees some of his comrades suffer injury or death at the hands of another individual, he feels pain and resentment himself, and, though not himself a direct object of the injury, he desires that the offender shall be punished. In this simple combination of resentment and sympathy we have a fact of extreme importance for the moulding of the moral consciousness,—infinitely more important than any calculation as regards social utility. If anybody makes the objection, that this explanation models the savage mind too much after our own, I may, choosing one out of innumerable similar instances, refer to Prof. Romanes's terrier which, "whenever or wherever he saw a man striking a dog, whether in the house or outside, near at hand or at a distance, . . . used to rush in to interfere, snarling and snapping in a most threatening way".[1]

[1] Romanes, *loc. cit.*, p. 440.

While public opinion thus demands that vengeance shall be exacted for injuries, it is also operative in another way. Whilst the resentment of the offended party may seem to outsiders to be, in some cases, too weak or too much checked by other impulses, it may, in other cases, seem to be unduly great. If the offender is one with whose feelings men naturally sympathise, this sympathy will keep the desire to see him punished, within certain limits, and if they sympathise equally with the suffering of the offender and with that of his victim, they will demand a punishment only equal to the offence. This demand—in combination with the rough idea natural to an uncultured mind that offence and punishment are to be measured by their external aspects—lies at the foundation of the strict rule of equivalence, which is thus an expression, not of unrestrained barbarism, but of advancement in humanity and civilisation. If this explanation be the correct one, the rule in question must have been originally restricted to offences committed by fellow-tribesmen, as public opinion could not otherwise have been an impartial judge. In speaking of the system of tit-for-tat prevalent among the Guiana Indians, Mr. Im Thurn expressly says: "Of course all this refers chiefly to the mutual relations of members of the same tribe".[1] When, on the other hand, we find, as we do, savages acting according to the same principle in their relations to other tribes, the reason for this may be sought partly in the strong hold which this principle has taken of their minds, and greatly in the dangers accompanying intertribal revenge, which make it desirable to restrict it within reasonable limits.

No facts then remain, so far as I know, which would contradict the view, hitherto so generally accepted, that resentment is essentially directed against its real or presumed cause. While the seeming exceptions to this rule have been shown to be due to the influence of other considerations to which resentment has been obliged to yield, innumerable instances might be put forth to prove the rule. I might in this connexion, for instance, refer to the practice of punishing "the offending member," which occurs among various peoples and is not unknown even among savages, but I shall restrict myself to saying a few words about another subject, which is of vast importance in the psychology of resentment.

Everybody knows that, among ourselves, at least, resentment is much more easily excited by intentional injury and by injury arising from negligence than by unintentional

[1] Im Thurn, *loc. cit.*, p. 214.

hurt. This is especially the case with deliberate resentment, which in fact seems impossible where no volitional cause of the hurt is assumed. Among savages again, as we find from trustworthy authorities, a distinction is often, but not always, and hardly ever with satisfactory preciseness, drawn between accident, *culpa* and *dolus;* and the history of penal law shows how slow and gradual the full recognition of this distinction has been among civilised peoples. All this may be easily explained from what has been said above about the natural direction of resentment, and the increasing regard paid to human suffering. The direction is against the presumed cause of pain, but for the discovery of the cause more intelligence may be requisite than is possessed by a savage. If my arm or my foot by mere accident gives a push to my neighbour, and he, after due deliberation, is perfectly convinced of my innocence, surely he cannot feel angry with me. Why not? Simply because he makes a distinction between a part of my body and myself as a volitional being, and finds that *I* am no proper object of resentment, as the cause of the hurt was merely my arm or my foot. Every man, however, is not able, or is not willing, to draw that distinction, and the result is what we call unjust resentment This may be due either to low intelligence or to a craving, not sufficiently bridled by sympathy or moral considerations, for giving vent to the angry passion. Hence the difference between the resentment of an uncultured and that of a cultured mind, a difference which evidently does not touch the essence of that feeling itself.

Deliberation, however, may be carried still further. If a man has suffered wilful injury, he may come to think that it is unreasonable and cruel to desire to requite suffering by suffering, unless some good result—especially the removal of the bad will whence the original suffering sprang—seems likely to be thereby attained. He will probably find it difficult, perhaps impossible, altogether to submit to this voice of reason and sympathy, because, as we have already seen, there is a deep-rooted connexion between the desire to inflict counter-pain and the desire to remove the cause of the pain suffered. He will find it most difficult if he assumes the mischievous volition to be rooted in the man's whole character; he will find it easier if he can trace it back to some apparently accidental cause, such as insufficient knowledge or some physical disturbance. In fact, he has only to make a wider use of the lesson which his relation to the inanimate world has forced upon him. If he burns himself on a hot plate, he immediately tries to remove the cause of

his suffering, but he cannot reasonably desire to inflict counter-pain on a thing which can feel no pain. Of course, for a moment one may feel like Dr. Nansen, to whom, when he was crossing Greenland, it would have caused "quite real satisfaction," as he says, to destroy a sledge which was heavy to draw.[1] Such a desire, however, cannot last. Even the dog which hurts itself while playing with another dog, by running into a tree, changes its angry attitude immediately as it notices the real nature of the pain-giver.[2] In order fully to understand the difference between injury resulting from an inanimate thing (with which, to the enlightened mind, all sorts of accidental injuries are on a par) and injury inflicted by a volitional being, we must, however, also bear in mind that, in the former case, there is no exulting adversary who irritates us by his humiliating success.

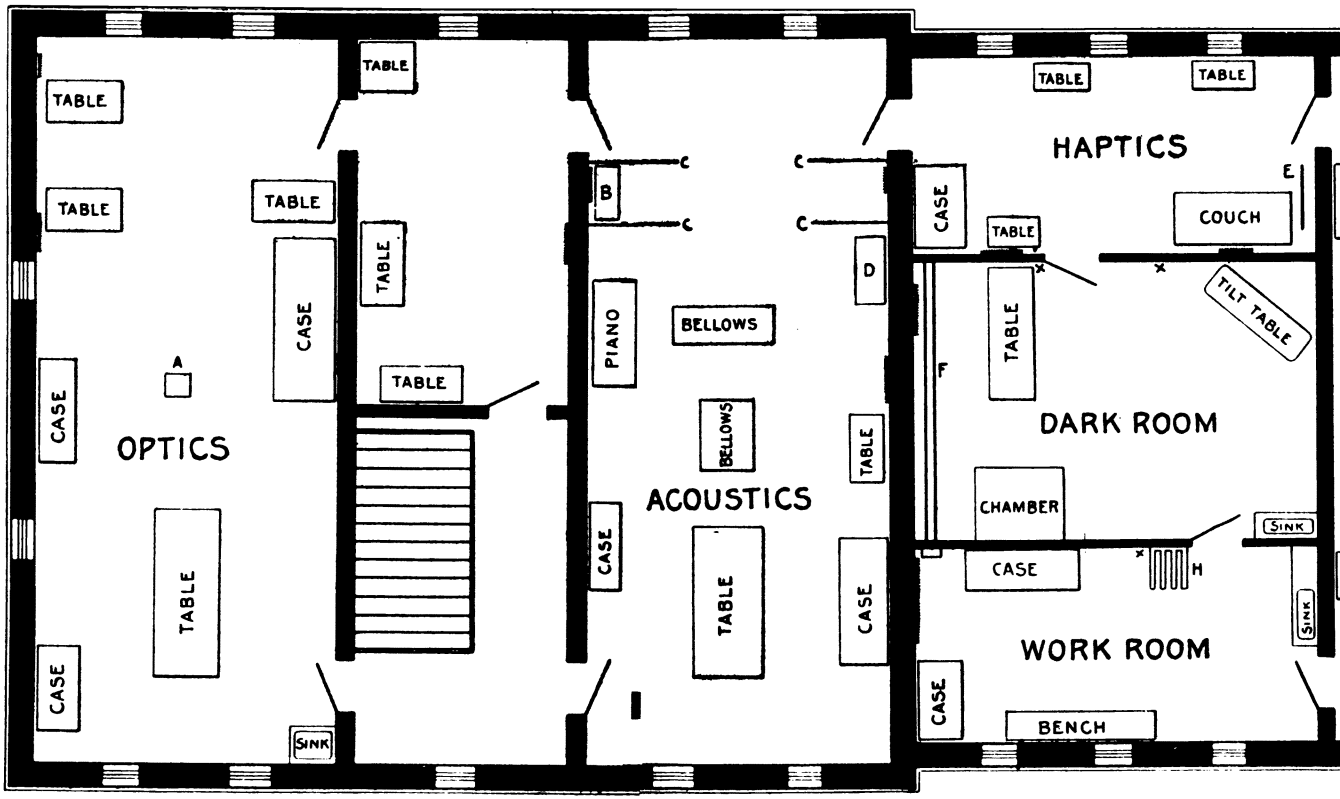
These last considerations have already brought us near the moral problem. It is in connexion with this that Dr. Steinmetz's theory seems to me perhaps most unsatisfactory. He himself finds it necessary to call in considerations of utility and social expediency in order to explain the direction of revenge and punishment, and from those considerations, I presume, we have then to explain the notions of moral guilt and responsibility. All this I consider to be fundamentally wrong. Responsibility, assuredly, has its root in a principle far deeper than the calm idea that a certain individual, *viz.*, the offender, should be sacrificed for the public weal; and the partition-wall which Dr. Rée and Dr. Steinmetz have erected between revenge and punishment is demolished by an overwhelming array of facts. Space does not permit me, however, to give reasons for my opinions on these important points, which, besides, do not fall within the scope of the present article.

In conclusion I wish to add a word about the method by the aid of which the conclusions here opposed have been arrived at. For my own part I consider it to be of vital importance for psychology to make much more use of the comparative method than it has hitherto done. At the same time it should use it with great care, and should especially try to avoid those mistakes in methodology which, in my opinion, encumber so many sociological works of recent date. Dr. Steinmetz has largely founded his psychological theory—which forms only a part of his, in many respects, important work—on cases of savage vengeance which he

[1] Nansen, *Eskimo Life*, p. 213 *sq.*

[2] Hiram Stanley, *loc. cit.*, p. 154 *sq.*

quite arbitrarily and unmethodically, without ever consulting animal psychology, interprets as survivals from earlier stages through which the human race has passed. This, I maintain, is to introduce into psychology the most fatal error of modern sociology. The study of phenomena which may with any serious probability be regarded as survivals is indeed of extreme importance, and has already led to many brilliant discoveries; but, at the same time, I am of opinion that an uncritical survival-worship has given rise to a host of fantastic theories, which, in minds conversant with exact procedure, are unfortunately apt to weaken belief in the comparative method altogether. When I find among anthropologists that an ancient stage of universal polyandry is still affirmed with dogmatic certainty, on the ground that marriage with a deceased brother's widow is a custom of frequent occurrence; that *all* sacrifice is declared to have originated in a practice of eating with the god, preceded by a still earlier practice of eating the god himself; that universal totemism, with all sorts of presumed consequences, is becoming the religious dogma of a whole school, then I cannot wish comparative psychology to pass through a corresponding stage. Rather do I hope that the new science may be guided in its difficult course by the same judicious and truly scientific spirit that has made Prof. E. B. Tylor's great works the solid foundation-stones of historical anthropology.



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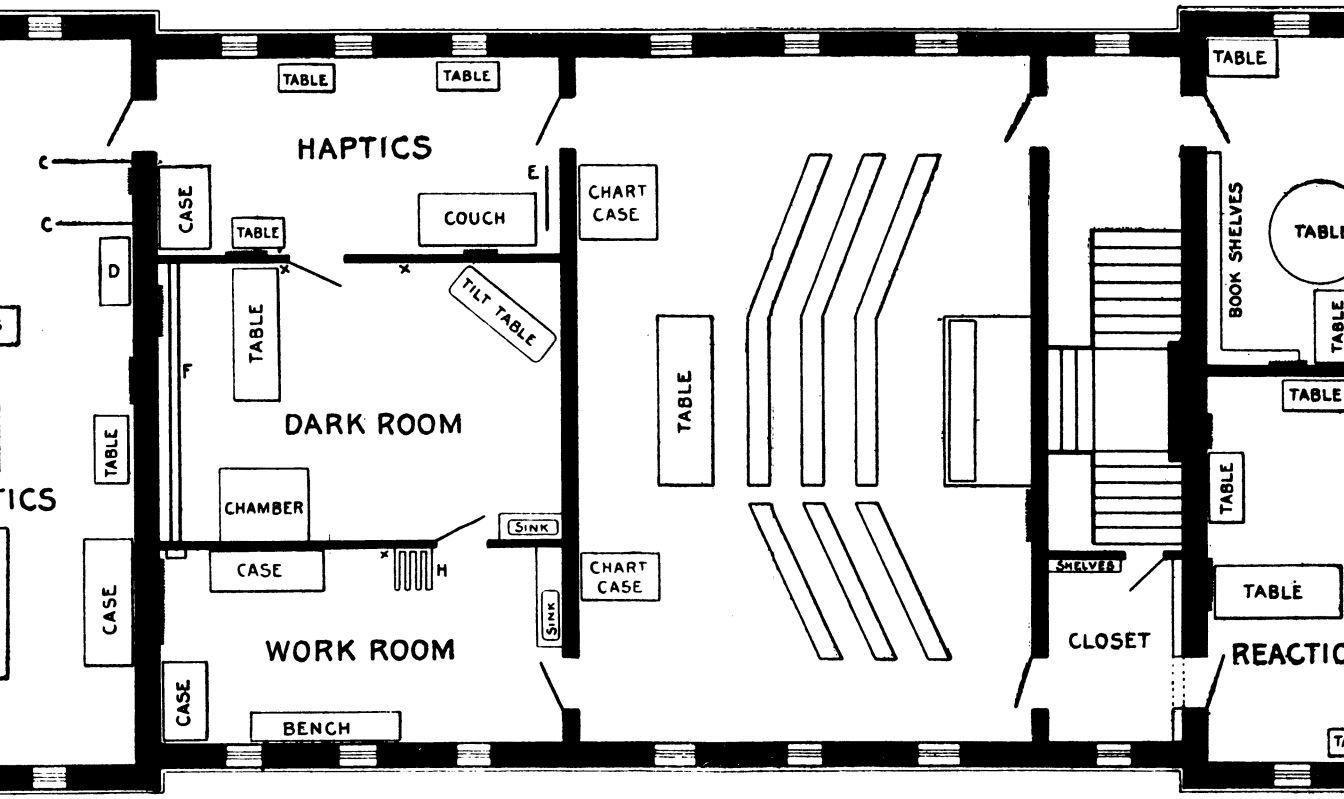

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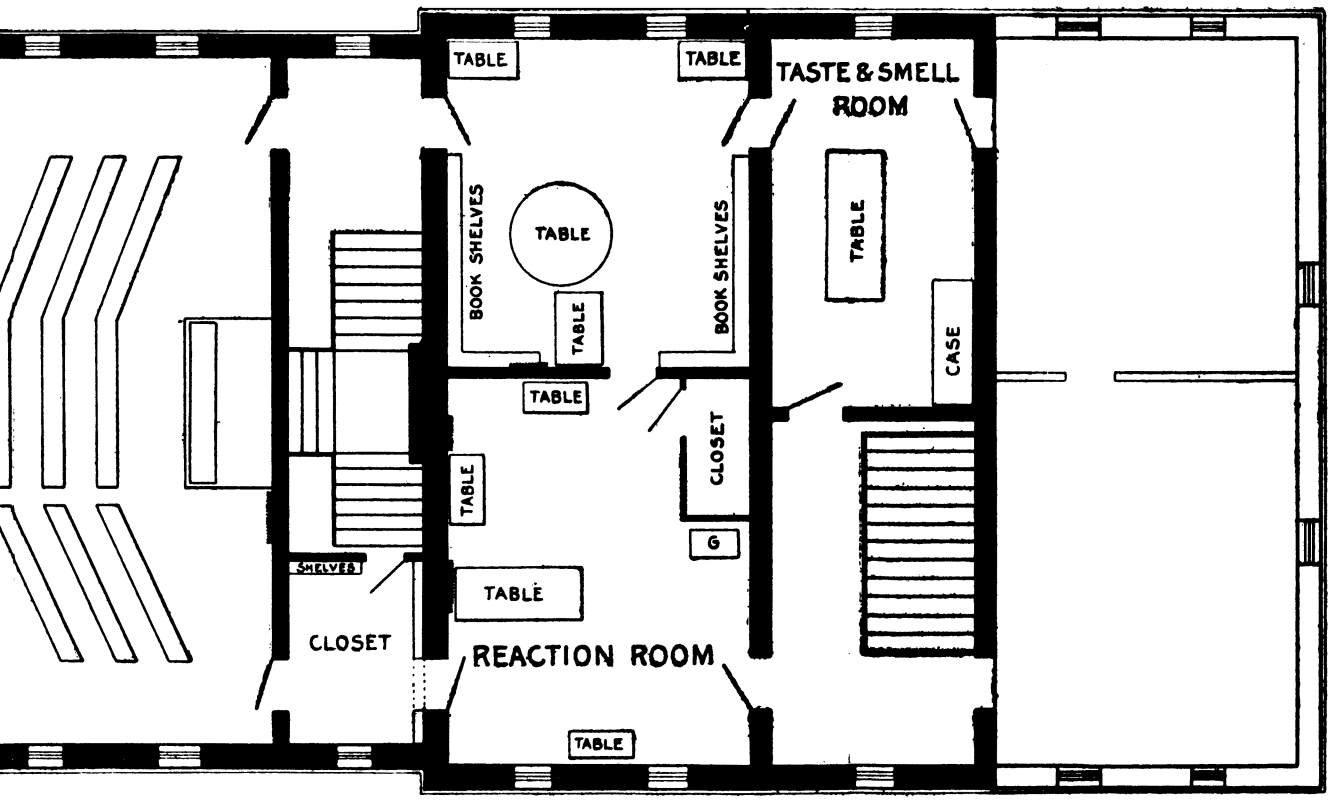

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