

ness in the light of a safeguard, without which we should be driven to and fro by every wind of doctrine on a troubled sea that never rests. On these accounts we feel inclined, that, in the vessel of the body politic, there should be a preponderance of ballast over sail; and that it really is so, we might put to the account of that optimism, which, with certain reservations, obtains to a very great degree in the framework and throughout the whole mechanism of human society.

39. But this property in the machine of a government to which we now advert, does not preclude that steady and sober-minded improvement which is all that is desirable. It only restrains the advocates of improvement from driving too rapidly. It does not stop, it only retards their course, by a certain number of defeats and disappointments, which, if their course be indeed a good one, are but the stepping-stones to their ultimate triumph. Ere that the victory is gotten, they must run the gauntlet of many reverses and many mortifications; and they are not to expect that by one, but by several and successive blows of the catapulta, inveterate abuses and long established practices can possibly be overthrown. It is thus, in fact, that every weak cause is thrown back into the nonentity whence it sprung, and that every cause of inherent goodness or worth is ultimately carried—rejected, like the former, at its first and earliest overtures; but, unlike the former, coming back every time with a fresh weight of public feeling and public demonstration in its favour, till, like the abolition of the slave trade or that of commercial restrictions, causes