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Relative Progress

father used to be a highly respected man. One result of this was the fact that he frequently had among his visitors some really distinguished men. I used to pay very careful attention to their conversations because I thought that someday this information might be useful

day a group of men were gathered at our home talking about the differences between traditional ways of doing things and modern ways of handling them. One man said, "Our government restricts manufacturing, for if we had the necessary industrial investments, we would be even more highly developed than European countries are."

I asked, "How much real progress has Turkey made in the twentieth century?"

of the guests answered, "We have progressed a great deal. Let me tell you about the old feudal times. Back in those times the feudal lords used to sit and talk in a room like this, but no one younger than twenty-five was permitted to be present. They would talk and talk and talk without any awareness of the passage of time or of problems outside the

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room.

"I remember one incident very well. A man standing outside the open door was waving his hand to get attention. Someone in the group said, 'There is a person outside waving his hand at us. Is there something wrong? Let us hear he wants.

"Someone near the door asked the hand-waver what he wanted, and then he passed the information on to the person alongside him, and in this way--from mouth to ear, from mouth to ear--everyone learned what the man outside wanted: 'He has heard that someone inside has a watch, and he wants to know what time it is, because he has a guest who must depart in time to reach such-and-such a place by nightfall. The watch owner slowly reached inside his pocket and began feeling about for his watch. In the meantime, the conversation resumed, half an hour passed, and they forgot about the man waiting outside. That man became impatient and began waving his hand again. When asked what he wanted, he responded, 'Gentlemen, I am still waiting to learn the time!

"When this message was relayed throughout the room, watch owner again reached for his watch. After he pulled the watch out, he said, 'Oh, I forgot my glasses. They are at home.' Someone else let him borrow a pair of glasses, and

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the watch owner studied his watch and began to count the minutes. He finally said, 'It is seven and thirty minutes.'

"Well, compared with such people, modern Turks are much more active and alert. If you ask a modern person for the time, he will say immediately, 'It is seven-thirty.'"

After hearing this incident, I was not very impressed with the speaker's claim about progress. Did progress amount to no more than the saving of an hour between traditional ways and modern ways?