FACING REALITY

ESMÉ WINGFIELD-STRATFORD

"I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land."

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BY

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INTRODUCTION

In the following pages I have tried to show the danger in which our civilisation stands owing to its neglect of reality. Our advance in mechanical power during the last century and a half has transformed the conditions of human life. Its ever increasing pace and complexity call for a corresponding advance in mental and social organisation.

No such advance has been made or even seriously attempted. We have gone on feverishly improving the machines and leaving the rest to chance; in consequence, our increased powers have been turned to wasteful and mutually destructive purposes. We have the power to smash civilisation to pieces and both in the international and domestic spheres are preparing to use it, for want of a sane attempt to order our affairs to the best advantage.

I have first tried to show the nature and unique urgency of the crisis through which civilisation is passing. I have next traced its development out of the failure of mankind to adapt itself mentally to its advance in physical power. In default of any rational effort to control the situation, free play was given to an anarchy of egotisms, private and national, which not only dissipated the hard-won spoils of nature but actually turned them to a fearful menace.

The further we plunged into anarchy, the more difficult did it become to recover control, owing to the fact that when it is in everybody's interest to distort the truth, lying becomes a universal art. The not unnatural result was a tendency to burke serious issues and an unwillingness to face the inconvenient facts of life, whence we were only partially awakened by the criminal lunacy of the Great War, which brought civilisation to the verge of collapse, and warned mankind in unmistakable terms that it must either mend its ways promptly or perish miserably.

An attempt is next made to examine in more detail the mental habits bequeathed from a state of civilisation which our own efforts have outdated. The hope of appreciating or facing reality is frustrated by reason being made a slave to will. Our judgment, our vision, are distorted by passion; positively by our desire to see things as we would have them, negatively by our distaste for taking more mental trouble than we can help. The results of this turning away from the truth are traced in creative art, in politics, in the social system and finally in religion.

There is no need that civilisation should perish. If only our wisdom were to increase with our resources, we might, within the lifetime of most of us, realise a state of things of which the most robust optimist has hardly dared to dream. Our destiny is in our power, we have only to command it. It is by our neglect that it becomes our mistress and our destroyer. The cause lies in our haphazard and slovenly methods of thought, and, most of all, in our failure either to seek

or see the facts of life. We, who were born for the truth, live in a world of delusions. We have lost our innocence of vision, and see only the conventions, symbols and formulas that we have created in the image of our desires and fears.

The disease and the remedy are within ourselves. To propound schemes and systems of social reform is worse than futile. To a man whose way of life is bringing him to the brink of the grave, we do not present a bottle of patent medicine. Either the whole man must be changed or nothing is done. It would be hard to better the old precept that men should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their hearts and be converted.

The problem is, in its essence, one of religion. But religion itself is, more than any other human activity, infected by our haphazard and slovenly methods of thought, so that the very name has come to be associated with myth and make-believe. But if we are to get right with reality or, in the time-honoured evangelical phrase, with God, it must be by a ruthless determination to get the truth in religion, even if we have to break down Church walls to attain it. For religion is man's attitude in face of the ultimate reality.

It only remains to add that I have tried to see and discuss this matter from the standpoint of no sect or party, but as one humbly seeking for the truth in a matter of vital importance. It is easy to paint a situation in hectic colours, and to clamour for revolutionary nostrums. But it is better and wiser to understate a

good case than to call fools into a circle by assaulting a jaded appetite for sensation. The danger to all of us is sufficiently imminent, sufficiently alarming, without any attempt to exaggerate it.

If half of what I have tried to establish be very truth, the catastrophe towards which we and ours are rapidly though not inevitably drifting is something to appal the most lurid imagination. I beg, therefore, for no more than a patient and critical hearing, that I may be judged not by passion nor prejudice, but by the reality to which I have appealed. And if, in the course of argument, I have been betrayed into bias or injustice, I trust that the blame will be allowed to rest upon my own shoulders, and that the fault of the pleader will not prevent a fair judgment of the case. What any one of us is or thinks is of infinitely little importance. The truth is all that matters. May it, even at this latest hour, prevail!

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CHAPTER I

LIFE AND REALITY

WHICHEVER of the versions of its history we choose to accept, we are at least safe in affirming that life, from its beginning in jelly to its culmination in man or beyond-man, is one continuous adaptation of the creature to a reality of which that creature is part. The meanest animalcule, which folds itself round some speck of food and then leaves it after absorbing its nourishment, is facing the facts as it understands them and making such arrangements as it can to deal with them.

It is more akin to the sage and hero than to the "active" volcano or the clouds which Coleridge took as the types of freedom, but which are merely casual collections of matter blindly driven along by forces as blind as they, and whose very names are only for the arbitrary convenience of conscious life in comprehending its opposite.

Outside life there is no unity that endures, there is neither progress nor memory; crystal and stone and planet have no being except in our minds, and the particles of matter cling together or fly apart in one perpetual, purposeless dance of death.

What, then, is the object of life? What makes it worth while for the animalcule to grope for food and the dying Goethe to call for light? Surely the impulse that urges forward all creatures, at first blindly but at last with increasing consciousness of its purpose, was never better expressed than in the words: "that they should have life, and have it more abundantly."

Life, in fact, is its own object. As it grows aware of a wider and wider reality, so does its reply become more varied, more delicate and more imperative. Ever more and more does it rejoice in its strength and beauty, ever further and further is it removed from the blind obedience of matter, as it comes to understand itself and to take command over its destinies.

Now that our eyes have been opened, however dimly, to its upward progress through so many millions of years, who shall dare to limit its growth by human imagination? It may be that we are on the way to a race of beings to whom we shall be as mud. It may be that our own human experiment will be sidetracked like that of the gigantic lizards, that not to our children or even to our planet will be granted the realisation of life's possibilities.

That, if it be so, is no reason why we, about to die, should not have life and have it as abundantly as possible according to our means. It is well to act on the assumption, which may be true, that the destiny of life is in our hands.

If every creature were accurately apprised of such facts as concern it and able to make the appropriate reply with automatic exactitude, the world would be

a more orderly and happy place than it is, but life would also halt in its tracks and maintain a comfortable stagnation until the diminishing heat of the sun chilled it out of existence.

It is fortunate that life has, from the very beginning, been wasteful and haphazard to an almost incredible extent. Its adjustment to reality has been, at best, but blind and blundering guesswork. Not that any living thing is ever entirely without a reason for what it does, but that the facts of life are constantly changing, and life fails to change with them. The batsman makes a correct stroke at one ball, and tries to repeat it on the next, which is different, to the loss of his wicket.

One of the most curious instances of this failure of life to adjust itself to changing reality is that of the lemming rats in Norway, who every ten years or so gather in immense hordes and migrate, eating up everything on their way, into the sea. It is conjectured that long ago there were feeding grounds which the waves have covered, and that these rats have not even now discovered that times have changed and a wise rat will change with them.

It is not difficult to think of men and peoples who order their lives in much the same fashion as lemmings. There are men who, observing a rise in some particular class of securities, assume that it is in their very nature to go on rising, and buy in at an extravagant price on the verge of a slump. There are nations who because some particular policy—say a high tariff or free trade—has succeeded for a time, imagine that

they have discovered the simple formula for prosperity.

Like the lemmings, they continue to follow the old, tried path when the happy feeding grounds are under the sea. Life for them is an adjustment to circumstances that have ceased to be. They have lost touch with reality.

We shall not concern ourselves with the question as to whether animal life has developed by the different species adapting themselves to reality by a cunning passed on from generation to generation, or whether reality has forced itself on life by killing off all but those members who have chanced to be adapted to it. That is a biological problem with which we are here in no way concerned, since there is no reason for assuming that what may have held good for brutes also holds good for men. It may be, as Huxley thought, that it is the task of humanity to reverse the process of natural selection, and follow a rule more akin to that of Christ than that of primeval dragons tearing each other in their slime.

We have acquired discourse of reason to no purpose if not to the comprehension and shaping of our destiny as a species. What was a blind adjustment to reality in the past has now to become an ordered and deliberate progress, as the only alternative to a catastrophe that may be final as far as mankind is concerned.

For neither blind selection nor a more or less instinctive adaptation will any longer serve the purposes of mankind. Reason, with its result of a partial

command over nature, will, if it fails to be our saviour, prove our destroyer.

The brontosaurus, who had indulged in a tearing match with a neighbouring tyrannosaurus, could probably, if he happened to be the survivor, shamble off and refresh himself comfortably from the top of the nearest tree, not permanently the worse for the adventure. It would have been different for him if, in the course of the fight, the combatants had succeeded in destroying the whole forest, with most of its inhabitants, which is very much what happens in the organised combats of mankind, and will happen to an increasing extent in the future.

To trust to luck and let slip the dogs of natural selection upon human communities is, quite irrespective of what may or may not have served in past ages, to sign the death warrant of humanity. Life has come out of the nursery and has to make its own way in the world or perish.

Whether, in regard to the past, we are Lamarckians, and believe in instinctive adaptation, or Darwinians, and believe in a blind struggle to survive, may be a question for experts, but about the future no reasonable man can fail to be a Lamarckian, with the difference that adaptation must be no longer instinctive but of deliberate purpose on the part of each individual and of mankind as a whole.

Whatever the means of performing it, the task of life is always the same adaptation of the creature to reality, and to a reality that grows wider and more opulent with each new advance of life to meet it. A

man does not live in the same world as a beast, nor a fool in the same world as a sage.

It would be impossible to sink the mind so low as to form the faintest conception of the dark and scanty world that exists for the animalcules—an infinitely vague sense of something good to absorb, an infinitely blind groping and perhaps a faint and vague sense of alternate want and satisfaction.

Still more incomprehensible to our imagination is the world as it exists for a plant, which solves its own problems, sometimes with elaborate ingenuity, but without the apparent possession of any sort of consciousness except, perhaps, something diffused through the whole organism in a way of which we may write, but can by no means comprehend.

And yet the plant and the animal deal with their own reality according to their own needs in a way that has sometimes moved the envy of the most imaginative among mankind.

"Thou," cries Keats, listening to the nightingale,

"Hast never known

The weariness, the fever and the fret

Here, where men sit and hear each other groan."

In the same way did Rousseau, sick of the shams of a frilled and bewigged civilisation, sigh for the noble simplicity of the savage.

What is a mood, and no more than a mood, among Western peoples, is a fixed habit of mind among many of their less progressive brethren. Such a people as the Chinese desire nothing better than to come to a permanent and comfortable arrangement between life

and reality, never to change the world they live in nor their own reply to the demands that this world makes upon them.

So long as all goes well, the Sphinx Reality will, century in and century out, go on putting the same riddles, and the Chinaman will make the same polite and dignified replies as Confucius made before him, and the great, good Emperors before Confucius. In recent years the Chinaman's world has been changed, much in his own despite, and what answer he will ultimately make to a new set of riddles is a matter of no light moment to mankind.

In truth, this attitude of stopping the clock and keeping reality and life in fixed relations to each other has been that of an overwhelming majority of creatures from the beginning. There may even now be animals whose life and world are not essentially different from those of the first lumps of protoplasm that detached themselves from the warm Archaean mud. It is even possible that if a momentary intelligence could be granted to one of them for the purpose of defending this unambitious way of life, he could do so with the most irrefutable plausibility.

"Better," the minute philosopher might say, "our peaceful groping in the dark after specks, than the whole edifice of twentieth century civilisation and contention therewith." To which our only just reply would be, "you may be a sensible but you are nevertheless a wofully ignoble lump of jelly."

For all through the millions of years during which life has been replying to reality, it is only a scanty

minority that have cared to embark upon the adventure of enlarging their world, and their own selves or souls along with it. These have probably been driven to find a fresh solution, because the Sphinx has presented to them the alternative of answering a new riddle or dying. Most of them probably died.

A slight change of temperature or perhaps some mesozoic disease at which we can only guess was enough to wipe out the whole monstrous race of saurians, and leave the mastership of the world to insignificant but hardy little creatures who had hopped and scuttled about only too glad to keep clear of the claws and teeth of their gigantic neighbours. A slight change of reality had proved too much for the lizard powers of adaptation, the Sphinx had changed the riddle and they could only go on giving the old, superseded answer.

To-day a similar crisis is taking place with mankind. Fresh riddles are being propounded with unprecedented rapidity and men go on obstinately mouthing the old answers: "War is a necessity of life," "God is the author of one book and the property of one religion," "Empire is my people imposing its will upon lesser breeds," "The capitalist or the Bolshevik or the Bosche is the one enemy worth fighting against." But to give the old answer to the new question is as certain death to the man as it was to the lizard.

So that we are committed, at the peril of our lives, to putting ourselves right with reality or, as a Salvationist might express it according to his own pictur-

esque symbolism, with God. And it is a reality that changes with bewildering rapidity, a Sphinx that bombards us with riddles. For it is now but an academic question whether it is better to take the safe and unambitious way of Chinaman and animalcule.

There can be no question of stopping the clock. It is we and our Western forefathers who have set the pace in the game of life, and it is beyond our power to check it. We have chosen the heroic path, have volunteered for the forlorn hope of life—life that has only progressed by a series of forlorn hopes—and it is too late to retreat. Linked as we are with reality, we have got to keep pace with her changes or perish miserably in her wake.

In our childhood we used to be told of a day of judgment, at some comfortably distant date, in which all hearts and lives should be tried, and the false separated from the true as gold from dross in the furnace. Little did we dream that that day was upon us here and now, that even in all the pride and safety of life a voice, not to be denied, might sound from without to man: "Fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee—to look naked reality in the face, and live or die as thy worth may be."

Such a voice sounded when the harvest was standing ripe and the roads were alive with singing holiday-makers at the breaking of the peace in 1914. Answer we did, and though millions perished, civilisation, by the skin of its teeth, survived. But whether to attain fresh conquests, or whether like a desperately wounded animal it crawls along in weakness and un-

certainty until it receives its *coup de grace,* is a question that time will answer.

If the problem that we have to solve is more insistent than ever before, it is none the less one, we might say the one, of all time. The greatness of men and nations has consisted in this, that they faced reality with more success and sincerity than others, that they have seen her, as it were, naked. This will be apparent if we consider any one of those men of thought or action whom mankind has united to honour, and asking in what their greatness consisted.

Take Napoleon, who has the advantage for our purpose of presenting a sharp and obvious contrast of greatness and pettiness. His success as a soldier was due to nothing but the single eye for reality that he kept amid circumstances unprecedentedly favourable. He made himself master, by sedulous reading, of all that could be learnt from history about the military art, but this had the effect not of binding him to rules and precedents, but of giving his mind the widest scope for freedom.

He astounded his opponents by his contempt for rules, he turned up on the Danube when by all accepted principles he ought to have been in France, and the Austrian officers, when they laid down their arms, were less mortified by their defeat than scandalised at the conduct of this ignorant and presumptuous young man who dared to set up his notions of strategy against the rules of good old Marshal Daun.

It was only as he grew middle-aged and lost his

vigour and suppleness, both of body and mind, that Napoleon began to see the thing that was not, that he tried to march to Moscow as if it were Vienna and to ally himself with a blousy Hapsburg, as if that would make the Kings of Europe forget that he was a child of the revolution and take him to their arms as a brother.

Reality ceased to exist for him, he substituted for it an abstraction which he called his star, and which would bring him victories in spite of himself. To the problem of Spain he gave the answer of Austerlitz, he strove to establish his new Empire on the principles of the old régime. And he perished as every creature must who sins against reality and follows his own vain imaginations.

Why is it that we agree—even Mr. Bernard Shaw would, we imagine, accompany us thus far—in honouring Shakespeare as among the greatest of Englishmen? His own friend, Ben Jonson, remarked the deficiencies of his scholarship, there was never a man less tied to any formal rules and precedents of dramatic art. What has raised him for all time above his contemporaries is the man's simple and transcendent sense of reality.

Ingenious critics may try to make his characters the types of this or that, but what endears them to successive generations of audiences is the fact that they are not types at all, but men, Macbeth and Hamlet and Lear, of a reality so poignant that it seems to burn itself into the brain.

When Macduff pulls his cap about his eyes and

replies to Malcolm's consolations with, "He has no children!" we feel the reality of his loss as if we ourselves had been bereaved. Shakespeare looks out upon life with the open eyes of a little child, that sees it just as it is, and through it to what lies beyond.

But we need not go to our greatest for confirmation of the universal truth that a man's worth is his sense of reality. It is a fact of everyday experience. It is what we mean when we say that a man has character, or when we feel that his personality carries weight. It is not mere cleverness or even success that men admire in those with whom they are in daily contact, it is an innate sense of fact, a touch with reality.

The rough selection of school and mess-room is directed to the elimination of shams. Any tendency of a man to get "above himself," any little piece of "side" or self-advertisement designed to cry up his own worth as other than what it is, gets mercilessly pounced upon.

The pretentious man, he who cannot honour his cheques upon the bank of reality, is the butt of all time. He is Braggadocio, he is Ancient Pistol, he is the profiteer squire and the "temporary gentleman" who sports an eyeglass and painfully acquires a stock of rasping oaths in order to look like a regular.

Wherever men meet together there is a tacit understanding on this subject, that overlaps the bounds of discipline and convention.

"Was Major So-and-so with you in the great advance?" asked an officer of a couple of privates who were back at the depôt for a few days.

"He, sir!" came the reply, with the faintest suspicion of a grin, "not he! Why, they put him to look after a rest camp."

Even to the most loyal martinet, who had been in daily contact with the Major, it was impossible to miss or resent the meaning of this remark. And where the lips are silent, the eye twinkles assent.

So that alike in its most important and trivial manifestations, the secret of life is nothing but the just apprehension of reality. "From the unreal lead me to the real" is a cry that has gone up from the heart of every nation and every order of life, and the desire to escape from Maya, illusion, is not confined to the adherents of one philosophy alone. But it must not be imagined that reality is so simple and obvious a thing that it can be compassed by a formula or attained by a short-cut.

Movements towards the simple life or a return to nature not infrequently end by plunging comparatively simple and sincere people into elaborate artificiality. The fine gentlemen and ladies who sought relief from the insincerity of courts by going about with crooks and calling each other Coridon and Amaryllis were merely imposing one insincerity upon another.

On the other hand, a man so consciously artificial as Oscar Wilde could plead, not without some plausibility, that in choosing exquisite and recondite means of self-expression, he was clothing with the only appropriate form emotions which, as an artist, he really felt, and that to use the ordinary language of life for

feelings that were not ordinary was the grossest insincerity.

To be rough and uncouth is not necessarily to be sincere, any more than it is natural for a modern young man to stroll down Piccadilly naked. As life attains mastery over matter, so does it make its surrounding reality more complex, and needs more complex adaptations to it.

Rousseau's noble savage has no existence except as a noble aspiration, and even Carlyle's splendid cult of heroism was marred by a slight tendency to associate it with rudeness and violence that grew upon him in his later years and in his early maturity hardened his heart to drag the refined and delicate Jane Welsh to eat out her heart as the drudge of Craigenputtock.

It is especially necessary to sound this note of warning in view of the fact that a modern school of thinkers and artists imagines that it has discovered the whole secret of sincerity to lie in being as disagreeable as possible, and sedulously filing off the refinements of life. Necessary but unsavoury accompaniments of everyday existence, formerly supposed to be in the province of the doctor and sanitary inspector, are forced with disgusting irrelevance upon the attention of the reader by an otherwise subtle and charming novelist.

Another novelist animadverts with a scorn that every really cultured reader is expected to share upon a woman who says "perspiration" where he would say "sweat," oblivious of the fact that it is no more

natural to wish one's imagination to be assaulted by a word vividly creative of an offensive sensation than it is to sniff at every dirty person one meets in the street. The Victorian affectation of prettiness has, in fact, been succeeded by an affectation of ugliness that is equally insincere, and much less pleasing.

Poets vie with each other in discordant cacophony, artists in disfiguring and caricaturing their sitters, amid a chorus of praise from everybody who wants to be up-to-date, including the victims themselves.

There is another short-cut to reality whose advocacy is but the incomplete application of a fruitful and stimulating idea. This is the concentration upon the bare facts of life as they can be recorded exactly and quantitatively in books of statistics.

Such is the standpoint of one of our most thoughtful modern novelists, Miss Rose Macaulay, in the most brilliant and challenging of her books, as a title for which she has coined the catchword Potterism. In so far as this Potterism denotes the sloppy and sentimental thinking that passes everywhere current nowadays, sympathy from all men of goodwill must go out to Miss Macaulay in her crusade against it. It is only when she comes to the remedy that she allows herself to overshoot the mark.

To eliminate all the tenderness and colour from life, to act as if all mysteries were conquerable by rule and line and as if there were no truth that could not be comprised between the paper covers of a blue-book is to simplify the quest for facts by ignoring all but the most unessential and trivial. It is the conduct of

Bunyan's man with a muck rake, who could look no way but downwards, and went on patiently raking together straws when One was standing by, proffering a crown of glory.

"Back to the facts" can only be an inspiration when we remember that the facts that are seen are temporal but the facts that are not seen eternal. For there are spiritual as well as material values in life.

Precisely the opposite course is that pursued by a large school of mystical devotees, especially in Eastern countries, who sacrifice everything else to union with God, or the supreme reality as they understand it, and so spiritualise and refine the object of their quest, that in grasping after an abstraction they cast away everything concrete, until we have the spectacle of the haggard and filthy ascetic sitting cross-legged by the roadside, with his mind fixed sternly on nothing whatever, under the fond delusion that nothing is everything.

This may be an extreme instance, but the whole literature of mysticism tends to show that the conscious quest for the divine union has, in practice, been to a greater or less extent vitiated by the illusion that to comprehend reality it is necessary to exclude some part of it, designated as the world or the flesh or lust or vanity.

But God, if He exists, must be in the workshop as much as in the Church, and in the drawing-room as He is on the mountain. The lives of saints are often no more satisfactory than those of worldlings or materialists, and it would be better and wiser to get

drunk with Falstaff than to join Simeon Stylites on his pillar.

The very nature of our search for reality forbids us from running to extremes. That way lies spiritual pride, the most deadly, though the least ignoble of all the vices. To be healthy is to be sane, and the health of every creature consists in the delicacy and suppleness of its adaptation to reality. To look the facts in the face and to order life accordingly is a task that demands from moment to moment all the energy and resource that life has to command.

There is no leaving the helm in negotiating the shoals and currents of time. Man may rest, but not so the deep in which he is borne, and the lazy or unskilful pilot of civilisation may find his "unsinkable" ship waterlogged and slowly foundering on a sea as clear as glass. For there is no adventure so splendid or so fraught with peril as this supreme one of keeping right with reality.

CHAPTER II

THE CRISIS OF CIVILISATION

HERE we may be confronted with an obvious and natural objection. To what purpose, it may be asked, is all this pother about getting right with reality if the problem has been with us since the dawn of creation, for more centuries than the experience of the oldest among us counts days?

After so many millions of years, we may surely be trusted to muddle through our three-score and ten without any serious fear of a catastrophe. We shall no doubt make mistakes, but we can put our trust, like our fathers before us, in coming to some sort of terms with reality, and leaving to our descendants a world at any rate not much worse than we found it.

This comforting doctrine is based upon the assumption that the thing that has held good in the past must of necessity hold good now and for all time. But, if our interpretation is correct, there is reason for believing that the problems confronting humanity today are without precedent or analogy, except perhaps in such circumstances as have preceded the annihilation of former lords of creation such as the mesozoic lizards to whom we have already referred. For man's very success in quickening the pace of life has made his task of adaptation to reality at once more strenu-

ous, and the affair not of individuals or nations, who can go under in case of failure without injury to the rest, but of the whole race, which may fail once and forever.

The time has, in fact, come for life to take a step forward. Adaptation to reality has hitherto been an affair of individuals or groups like cities, nations and Empires. Humanity as a whole has been content to blunder on without purpose or cohesion, trusting to the quarrels of its members and the chapter of accidents, dignified with the names of God, providence and evolution, to make it all right in the end.

There is something very satisfying about Tennyson's sentimental dream of a far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves. That is the spirit of the child, who imagines that it will always find dinner ready at one, and a nurse to tuck it up in bed at seven. But the human race has now developed to a point at which it is perfectly capable of taking charge of its own destinies, and that, we believe, is the first and great adaptation that life is called upon to make to reality.

Now that we have grown up and are in possession of cheque-books and Lewisite gas, we shall come quickly to a bad end if we go on behaving as if we were still in the nursery. It is high time to give up playing at animals, and take serious stock of our new situation before it is too late.

The peril is in the appalling inertia of the human mind, that will accept any version of the situation and find any excuse rather than arouse itself to the grand,

collective effort of looking a wholly new set of facts in the face and making a revolutionary change in its way of life to meet them. The idea that what was good enough for our fathers will last out our time is so specious and comforting that the brothers of Dives were not more hard than ourselves to arouse to a sense of peril. And facts of the most brutal obviousness warn us that the peril is deadly and at the door.

The horror of the Great War and its aftermath is surely sufficient demonstration that whatever war may have been in the past it is now worse than obsolete, and only serves as a highly efficient method of collective suicide. The agony of Russia is but a mild foretaste of what must, as inevitably as night follows day, be the fate of all civilisation, unless it can succeed in understanding and taking control of the delicate and dangerous machinery with which the blind competition of its members has provided it.

All of us must remember the strange state of mind in which most people faced the brief interval of suspense between the launching of the Austrian ultimatum and our own declaration of war upon Germany. In defiance of all prediction and probability, few of us could bring our minds to believe that so complete a reversal of our experience as a European war, under modern conditions, could actually be upon us.

We remembered Agadir, and how close we had been to it then, we thought of three or four crises that had given us comfortable thrills before they were settled. The management had provided so many

illusions of false fire that we, seated on our benches or arm-chairs, hardly dared to doubt that this was the best and most thrilling of all, a little too realistic, perhaps, but surely not the theatre itself ablaze!

Even when war was an accomplished fact, there was a sickly hope that it would after all be something polite and dignified; the army would no doubt play its traditional part in a spectacular and pro-French Waterloo, the fleet would take care that nothing really unpleasant should be allowed to happen at home, and in the meantime we might enjoy our newspapers, decide the county championship, and make our watch-word "business as usual."

In no case would the experienced and gentlemanly people at the head of things allow a world tragedy to develop after it had become rough and inconvenient to everybody.

But develop it did, year followed year and horror was piled on horror, fresh combatants were drawn into the vortex, famine and revolution stared mankind in the face, the ravages of plague were added to those of war, crippling obligations were incurred as if the mere adding of a nought or so to the national debt were a matter too trifling to call for comment, bereavement was in every home, men's hearts failing them for fear and looking after those things which were to come—and yet there seemed neither the power nor even any serious purpose to call a halt.

It was as if a motor car were rushing at full speed down a hill towards the edge of a cliff, and the passengers, for there was no chauffeur, were all furiously

engaged in struggling for pennies that somebody had dropped. It was enough triumph to have gained a couple of hundred yards of Flanders mud at the cost of twenty thousand men.

God, our ancestors would have said, has been very long-suffering, and mankind can hardly accuse Reality of unmerciful dealing. Even though we repeatedly declined to heed her knocking at the door, and, when her questionings were no longer to be denied, afforded none but perverse and irrelevant answers, she withheld her hand.

We have been chastened, but we live. A last chance has been granted us to set our house in order and face the new facts of life. But if anything can be regarded as certain, it is that we have tempted God or reality far enough, that this chance is indeed the last.

The difficulty in proclaiming this truth is not that of convincing the reason. It is by no means original, it is in fact coming to be almost a commonplace among men who dare to think for themselves and are not the slaves to the catchwords of Press and party. Their arguments have been put forward with a wealth of corroborative facts and statistics, they have been urged with the ardour of prophetic intuition, and nobody has seriously undertaken the task of refuting them.

The logic of their opponents is that of the condemned cell. A certain event may be expected in the course of the morning, but that is no reason for not making the best of a warm breakfast and the early

edition of the *Daily Mail* and the conversation of the chaplain. There is no sense in bothering about what cannot be helped.

It may help us to forget if we can manage to go on mouthing, like parrots, as many of the old formulas as possible, and trying to pretend that the good old days, to which they were suited, have never departed from us.

Is there any one who seriously maintains that mankind stands the remotest chance of weathering another universal squabble such as that from which we have, at any rate formally, succeeded in emerging? The powers of men for inflicting injury on each other were multiplying with a diabolical fertility during the war, and there is reason to think that even in the brief period that has succeeded it, an altogether revolutionary advance has been made in the art of human suicide.

From America has come the news of a gas capable of poisoning any of the world's greatest cities, with all their men, women and little children, with as much ease as we now smoke out wasps' nests. In aeroplanes and submarines we are evolving instruments of war by which either side can deal annihilating blows at the civilian life of the other, but which neither can effectually parry. The possibilities, or rather certainties, of the land-battleship have been pointed out so vividly and often that their repetition would be tedious.

The analogy is no longer that of children armed with revolvers, that is ludicrously under-stating the

case, it is that of a crowd of ill-conditioned and quarrelsome children all armed with bombs, any one of which, if thrown, is capable of blowing the nursery and all its inmates to smithereens.

Such is the crying and obvious and undisputed reality of our time. But even if, despite any effort on our part, some god or miracle were to intervene and save us from the fruits of our deeds, and an anarchy of nations failed to eventuate in war, it is doubtful whether, in default of some deliberate mastery of mankind over its own affairs, a catastrophe could long be averted.

The sequel of man's command over nature, which has enabled him to multiply a hundredfold the kindly fruits of the earth, has entailed the vast majority of mankind working under conditions of indescribable monotony to produce a state of life in few respects better and in some appreciably worse than that of the peasants and craftsmen who preceded them.

Of the surplus, an enormous amount is thrown into the gutter, wasted in lying advertisement, unnecessary reduplication, payment of unproductive middlemen, monopoly, friction and sheer competitive destruction. At the same time, we allow ourselves to breed with a reckless and belauded prodigality until every multiplication of the productive numerator is cancelled by a corresponding increase in the human denominator.

The only people who appear to profit at all, and indeed to excess, by the conquest of matter are a minority whose ignorance of life impels them to indulge in blind and joyless excesses, more offensive to

those who have not than beneficial to those who have.

This state of things, in spite of every effort to deny or ignore its existence, is producing an increasing bitterness in those who are expected to keep it going in order that others may enjoy the fruits of it. And these, who are often expected to resign themselves to conditions chiefly differing from slavery in the slave's certainty of employment, are nevertheless armed, with the characteristic inconsistency of our civilisation, with all the formal powers of tyrants.

Is it any wonder that the whole social edifice is rocking, and the blind and fatal impulse on the part of the "have-nots" to solve their difficulties by rising or voting to destroy the "haves" may eventuate in a tragedy greater than that of Russia because our social order is more delicate and complex, and we town-dwellers are even less fitted to survive its collapse than a race of peasants?

Does not the course of the last coal strike afford an instance of the same sort of purposeless drifting, the same blindness to facts, that was the real tragedy of the war? Nobody wanted it, nobody in his senses imagined he had anything to gain by depriving himself and his fellow men of a source of energy that is vital to their existence.

Everybody wanted the coal to come up, everybody professed to want a fair and adequate reward for the men who hewed and fetched it out of the depths of the earth, the gain that anybody stood to derive from the dispute was insignificant as compared with the loss caused by its prolongation, and yet everybody con-

cerned, Government, owners, workmen and the long-suffering community, stood by, week after week, in helpless and brutish apathy, as if there was some mysterious law of nature that strikes should be allowed to work their maximum of mischief, to cripple every other industry, to swell to the utmost the gaunt and desperate ranks of the unemployed, to drive the men to actual starvation, the masters as near as practicable to bankruptcy and the whole social system to the brink of revolution before honour and interest could be satisfied by some simple compromise that ought to have been hammered out long ago as a matter of industrial routine.

There is no choice before mankind at the stage it has reached to-day but to regain, and that quickly, its failing vision of reality, or to perish ignobly amid circumstances of unimaginable horror. The best that it can hope for, in case of failure, is for the few survivors to start all over again in a doubtful struggle for survival with their fellow animals.

Can it be said that we have as yet awoken to the necessity of making any serious collective effort to avert a disaster which to-morrow it may be too late to avert? We know, or could know if we cared to make use of our brains for so unpleasing a purpose, what another war would mean, but we take no steps to avoid it. We are more concerned with the miserable jealousies that we call honour and the petty interests that we imagine to be material but are more often those of swindlers and profiteers.

We are horrified at the prospect of a Sinn Feiner

thinking he has beaten us or a German getting the best of a deal, but we are ready to let our own people go roofless rather than deny the blessings of our exploitation to an unwilling people and a barren land.

Whether Germany can be fleeced of a yearly contribution, of doubtful advantage to the receiver, for forty years or sixty, what particular economic laws decree that Poles should be governed by Germans or *vice versa,* whose honour or profit demands the possession of the town of Fiume or the district of Tetschen or the Island of Yap, why all the horses and men of the Entente are necessary to compel the Port of Dantzig to become a free city, what particular delicacy of national honour requires that the impartial distribution of colonies should be interpreted as meaning the appropriation of the whole of them by the victors—all these things are held by universal consent to be more urgent and interesting than the desperate necessity that confronts us all.

The proverbial visitor from another planet might well jump to the conclusion that the whole of mankind was suffering from acute suicidal mania.

Those who pay the devoutest lip-homage to the name of Christ are perhaps the least sensitive to the significance of a warning that had never more relevance than now: "They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded: but the same

day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all."

The very images are of a strange appropriateness, whether the agent of our destruction be visualised as the obscene flood of Bolshevism or the rain of fire and poison fumes that we have to expect in the next war.

The amazing part of it all is that anybody who is so bold as to look past the palpable shams of modern life, and endeavour to awaken attention to realities that nobody dares deny, is brushed aside with the taunt of idealism used as a term of contempt. Surely the strangest of all the catchwords that pass current nowadays is this, that brands as an unpractical dreamer any man who sees further than a distorted looking glass or refuses to live in a fool's paradise because it is too uncomfortable a business to face the facts.

Even the cheery fatalism of the condemned man would be a more defensible attitude if he were to refrain from shouting "liar" at any one who dares affirm the existence of the gallows. Nor is it the most effective way of silencing one who hints of danger to compare him with a Prophet whom time and Nebuchadnezzar proved to have spoken no more than the bare truth.

An attitude of facing reality is, however, as far removed from despair as it is from the optimism that sees everything as it wants to. The "dismal Jimmy" or the man who considers it his mission in life to make people's flesh creep, is more the product of a vanity

and dyspepsia than the seer of things as they are. If a final catastrophe were inevitable, it would be doing no one any good to proclaim it. The most sensible answer to "to-morrow we die" is "eat, drink and be merry to-day."

But the present crisis in human affairs, if it is fraught with danger, affords as much ground for hope as for apprehension. Without realising the consequences of its choice, Western civilisation has been forcing the pace of life as it has never been forced before. It has chosen to play for the highest stakes and therefore to take the utmost risk. If the penalty of failure be the wrecking of civilisation, the reward of success may be an abundance and potency of life of which even now we hardly dream.

The game is one of skill. The least we can do is to make ourselves acquainted with its rules and pitfalls, to study the state of the score and the possibilities of the situation.

What we have hitherto done has been to double and redouble both stakes and difficulties without the least consciousness of what we were about or difference in our methods. The real origin of our present crisis has lain in an extension of our command over matter of headlong rapidity, and a use of it as reckless and haphazard as the extravagances of a sailor with a year's pay and a few days' shore leave.

By our own action, the relations of life to reality have undergone a revolutionary change without our hitherto having made any serious attempt to comprehend or adapt ourselves to the new situation, and this

in despite of the fact that failure of life to keep pace with reality means death. The partial anarchy of our social and the complete anarchy of our international relations are adaptations to a struggle for survival more bestial than human.

The dragons who tore each other to pieces in their primeval slime were pursuing exactly the same line of conduct as the armed and cultured powers of the twentieth century, and with more excuse, for the dragon could at least plead that his conduct was adapted to the requirements of a dragon-lorded world.

It is not only in these great affairs that we manifest our inability to keep pace with the facts of life. An advance in material power should carry with it a corresponding increase in mental capacity. This is a necessity which, if it has not been entirely ignored, has at least received wofully inadequate recognition.

Our educational schemes have tended to concentrate on still further increasing the command of mind over matter, we seek to rear up technical and commercial prodigies for the sole purpose of tending machines or acquiring power in the shape of money, forgetting that a brute is never more dangerous to himself and his fellows than when he is equipped with the powers of a demigod.

Samuel Butler has made a parable concerning a race of men who, on finding their mechanical powers increasing, deliberately took stock of the situation, and came to a reasoned conclusion that the benefits they were likely to derive from the use of machinery were outweighed by its dangers. Men, they thought,

would sooner or later become not the masters but the slaves of their own inventions, and with a view to averting such an evil, they smashed every machine to pieces and forbade, by the most stringent laws, anybody making or inventing one in the future.

The extravagance of Butler's humour has blinded most readers to the seriousness of his underlying idea. We naturally take with a grain of salt the doctrine that machines are capable of assuming a life of their own, and forcing their makers to become their slaves. But it is a fact of vital importance that a man who cannot master his own machine is something worse than a slave, and that mankind, in similar circumstances, is no better off than an engineer caught between his wheels.

Butler's imaginary Erewhonians were at least superior to us in this, that they came to a definite decision for adapting themselves to a new order of reality. That decision may have been as perverse and extravagant as you please, but it was at least saner and more reasonable than our own of calling full speed all round and leaving the result to chance.

Machines are by no means the only human contrivances whose reckless misuse is a danger to civilisation. If there is a sense in which we are the slaves of matter there is one just as true in which we are the slaves of words.

Every word was originally a generalisation from reality, a rough and ready way in which one life tried to pass on to another some part of its thought and experience. They are at best but imperfect symbols,

mere hints at a reality which they neither comprehend nor explain. But even from the earliest times, words have had a way of breaking loose from their moorings and of coming to exist for their own sake, as a substitute and not a symbol for reality.

The legends of most peoples are rife with mysterious words, whose mere repetition confers a tremendous power. Ali Baba chances to say "open sesame!" and lo, the magic doors slide apart and the treasure lies revealed. We aspire to put words to quite as startling uses, only in a less sensational way.

As we lose touch with reality, which is only another way of saying "as we lose sight of God," we take to ourselves words in the likeness of things, and bow down before the works of our own minds. When we want to embarrass a statesman or party, for reasons of our own, by attacking all expenditure of public money, necessary or unnecessary, we have only to coin a word like "squandermania" or adopt one like "wastrel" and the thing is done.

If we want to reduce a man to lifelong imprisonment and slavery, any little prejudice that may still survive against these formidable things is easily removed by altering the word for them to "preventive detention" and even calling the prison a hotel. Similarly, if we wish to retain scientific torture in our prisons, it is more tactful to speak of it as the "cat."

The opinion of most humane people and both reports of the latest Poor Law Commission may have demanded the abolition of workhouses, and this has

been accomplished with a stroke of the pen by turning them into guardians' institutes.

The policy of protecting industry acquired a bad name in the forties, but that is no reason for our not reintroducing it under the guise of reforming the tariff. And naked plunder is more likely to be palatable if we call it a scientific readjustment of taxation, just as the Romans were ready to take back their kings as soon as they called themselves Emperors.

There is no surer sign of a lost touch with reality than the tendency to see and think only in terms of words. It is a disease from which no period has been entirely free, but in recent times it has found a fertile breeding ground in the mass of ephemeral literature that is produced and forgotten with ever-increasing rapidity. And this is the great difficulty that one meets at the outset of any attempt to shew the dangers of the present situation and to awaken a sense of reality before it is too late.

Any reading of the situation that implies the necessity for strenuous effort is too uncomfortable to be considered on its merits, and a big word is as effective a silencer as a big stone. There is a large choice—"croaker," "Jeremiah," "pinchbeck Carlyle," "idealist," "apocalyptic," "hysterical," according to the tastes and probable education of the audience. If by these means it were possible to alter the facts themselves, there would be no more to be said.

CHAPTER III

POISONING THE WELLS

HITHERTO we have written of the failure of life to adapt itself to reality as if it were merely a matter of incapacity or ignorance. But on closer examination we shall find it to be largely a result of deliberate human contrivance. Men fail to see the world in which they live because they find that it suits their personal interests to throw dust into each other's eyes.

If you want to pick your neighbour's pockets, it will be all to your advantage to blind him first, and in a social order where a man thrives more by picking his neighbour's pocket than by lending him a hand, there is likely sooner or later to be a veritable epidemic of blindness.

When, towards the end of the eighteenth century, a series of great inventions began to revolutionise life and incidentally to throw the whole social order into the melting pot, a doctrine became fashionable that can best be described as one of mystical anarchy. The worst way of dealing with the new situation was to make any attempt to control it, the police would see that every man was allowed to keep what he could get and the free play of an enlightened selfishness—as if selfishness were compatible with enlightenment—would do the rest.

The idea was that in a peaceful state of society every man would find it to his interest to make himself as useful as possible to all the rest, the vendor of shoddy would drive his customers to his honest rival and the profiteer would soon be forced to lower his prices by competition. Men knew what was good for them and they would get it in a free market from those who could supply it.

Unfortunately this state of things had no existence except in the imagination of theorists, and was one of those facile simplifications of reality which leave half the actual and probable facts of life out of the reckoning. It was really an unconscious excuse of the will to avoid the strenuous effort demanded by the new situation. It would be so convenient if the industrial revolution could, by solving its own problems, relieve society at large from the necessity of self-determination.

Unfortunately selfishness in real life is neither beneficent nor enlightened. The selfishness of A. may aim with such enlightenment as it possesses at the unenlightenment of all the rest of the alphabet, especially if A. has shoddy to unload. The profiteer may not have his prices driven down at all, if the selfishness of his rivals leads them to see the advantage of forming a trust or ring to fleece the public, instead of competing with each other.

The results of the new *"laissez faire"* ought to have been apparent from the first, if it had suited men to open their eyes to what was going on all round them instead of taking their reality from books. But this

was precisely what did not suit those whose will was effective in ordering public affairs, the newly rich manufacturers, who were making money hand over fist out of the new machinery, and the middle class that was coming to its period of greatest power and prosperity in the second quarter of the nineteenth century.

As for the old squires, fresh from the plunder of the common lands, they had their own fortunes to make and their own people to keep under, so that, with the convenient exception of the Corn Laws, they were ready to stand in with this new race of hustlers however much they might dislike them personally, and to give a vague and tacit assent to the new, ruthless political economy of individualism.

It was enough that in the prolonged but, according to modern standards, mild and ineffective killing match that settled the accounts of one or two million soldiers in the generation following the French Revolution, the new machines of Lancashire enabled that minority of Englishmen who had anything except honour to lose to derive a winning advantage over the adventurer who was bleeding France to death.

The kind offices of the French privateers, or licensed pirates, had the added advantage of driving up the price of corn to such a height that the landowners basked in a veritable paradise of prosperity. Nobody, at least nobody who counted, cared much to know that this prosperity of a few was built upon the abject misery, without a precedent in our history, of peasant and workman.

It is well known now, by any one who cares to look up the facts, that little children, often no more than infants, were forced, in their multitudes, to work from early morning till late night amid unfenced machinery and under the stimulus of the rod until those hardy enough to survive were stunted in body and mind, how the enlightened selfishness of the parents backed up the enlightened selfishness of the employer, how any attempt to mitigate the horror of life in the new manufacturing districts was scouted as a vicious interference with the free play of economic laws, and how, finally, the old English countryside of roast beef and plum pudding became a squalid Hell in which a landless and pauperised peasantry toiled from the cradle to the grave on just enough, if they were lucky, to keep them alive and useful.

Such were the first fruits of the change in the conditions of life brought about by the new conquest of matter by machinery, and it is not without its significance that at the very time that things were at their worst, the most complacent theories were being formulated and passing muster about the necessity of leaving everything to look after itself.

Even when the lower class was getting sufficiently dangerous to compel a certain bettering of its condition in defiance of the economic laws that its masters had laid down, it was long before anybody was bold enough to say that the whole idea of letting things drift was a dangerous lie put forward, whether consciously or not, for interested purposes, and that the

selfishness of everybody, allowed free play, must end in the suicide of all.

As the "century of progress" wore on, it became apparent that the selfishness that had been going to work such wonderful results was a more complex and less calculable thing than the honest chaffering of traders in the market that inspired the French theorist, Bastiat, to an almost lyrical ecstasy in his *Economic Harmonies.*

The game of competition might produce incalculable results when the art of queering the pitch had been studied and mastered by most of the players. It became a question of maintaining not only that universal selfishness would work everybody's benefit, but that universal lying would, by some magic process, lead everybody to the truth. Such was the power of words that even this last marvel was not too much for human consumption.

Free discussion and a free press were the talismans that were to do as much for the perfecting of the mind as free competition for the needs of the body. The selfishness of every one would be enlightened, and therefore every one would be happy.

The respectable and bewhiskered gentlemen who flourished in the days of Albert the Good may have had the wisdom of the serpent in pushing their own interests, but they certainly had more than the innocence of the dove in believing any version of the facts that would justify them in so doing. The vision that they formed, with all the unquestionable sincerity of

men who know what they want to believe, was one of charming simplicity.

Once remove the tax on printed matter, which is even to this day supposed to be the same thing as a tax on knowledge, and allow every one to write what he likes, and the moment any lie or sophism is put forward by one writer, it will be in some other writer's interest to expose it, leaving it not to the Lord but to the public, which for this purpose was assumed to have much the same judicial capacity, to decide between the two.

In the same way the advertisement columns of the press would enable the beneficent egotists who had goods to sell to submit them to the choice, enlightened presumably by other advertisements, of those whose needs impelled them to buy. In short a general demand for truth in the open market would inevitably guarantee the supply.

It is curious that none of these naïve optimists appear to have grasped the significance of a quaint old story for which most of them, nevertheless, cherished a pious admiration. This story relates how two travellers arrived at a large and open market, in the province of Beelzebub, at which goods of every kind were being offered for sale. On being asked what particular commodity they had to supply, they answered that they had the Truth.

Not only was there not the least demand for this line of goods, but the worthy chafferers quickly had the sense to perceive that competitors of this kind would knock the bottom out of the market if they got

their goods into circulation—an improbable contingency, as the people were more easily moved to mob than to patronise such traitors to their beneficent and respected sovereign, the Prince of Lies.

John Bunyan had gone to the root of the matter long before a free market, commercial and intellectual, had come to be the panacea it was to our grandfathers. Even if there were the least chance of supply following demand in the matter of truth, there is certainly none at all when neither any serious demand for truth exists, nor any capacity of judging whether the thing supplied be the truth or no.

It is a great mistake, and one that every recent discovery in psychology has tended to dissipate, that truth in any form is what the majority of men desire, whatever they may profess or persuade themselves. Most people have a pretty shrewd notion of what they want to be told, and it is just that, and not any tedious or disquieting impartiality about the facts that they require from their favourite author or newspaper. Pilgrims who go about hawking the truth are, at best, bores and more probably offensive, blasphemous persons.

But there is no need to go to the psycho-analysts for confirmation of what must be glaringly obvious to any one who has the sense to see or think for himself instead of swallowing his ideas whole from books.

Ask the citizen who buys his party paper whether he desires to have the facts presented to him from any point of view but his own, whether he buys his *Daily Herald* for a fair sympathetic study of the case for

the owners or goes to his *Morning Post* in order to understand what inspired men like Pearse and Plunkett to go deliberately to a certain death in order that Ireland might live.

"Yes, but," you say, "it is just by such a conflict of opinions that men are able to arrive at the truth." Indeed! And how many citizens are there who habitually balance the opinions of *Post* and *Herald,* or any two such conflicting interpreters of the truth, either at home, or in the free libraries, or anywhere else?

How many fine old English gentlemen are there who will allow a Bolshevist rag to come into their houses, and how many workmen of advanced views would incur the wrath of their comrades by patronising one of the organs of capitalism? And even if any squire or navvy could rise to such miracles of impartiality, it is difficult to see how he would be the better when one man, who has taken the measure of his intelligence, is paid to shout in his ears that black is blue while another bawls out that it is a particularly vivid scarlet.

There are other ways of suppressing free discussion than by burning and imprisonment, and they are most of all patronised by those who profess to be its most devoted advocates. Heresy hunting was one of the most popular of mid-Victorian pursuits. When John Ruskin ventured, in a moderate and persuasive series of essays, to question the assumptions of the dominant *"laissez faire"* school, such pressure was brought to

bear on the magazine in which they appeared that the articles had to be discontinued.

He was fortunate, doubtless owing to the reputation he had acquired as a critic of art, to get his views accepted for publication at all. For, in a society ruled by competition, it is hopeless to expect any one to go to the expense of printing what is not likely to sell, and where every one is agreed in demanding smooth things from their prophets, he who is so unbusiness-like as to prophesy rough ones can hardly be surprised if he finds himself crying in the wilderness.

We have not yet questioned the assumption that those who supply goods or services will make it their business to study and wait upon demand. Only shortly before the war, a play obviously aiming at the exposure of the latest newspaper methods was called *What the Public Wants,* a title which every efficient journalist and business man must know to be hopelessly out of date. It is not a question of finding what the public wants and supplying it, but of producing the goods and making the public want them.

The whole modern art of advertisement is founded upon this assumption. Nobody, on his own initiative, wants to buy a box of unappetising globules, consisting principally of bread and soap, and placed on the market at anything exceeding twenty times what they cost to produce. He is probably well and has no need of medicine, and even if he were sick the concoction might as well be devoured by the pig for any good it is likely to do him.

But here steps in the enlightened egotist. If a man

is not ill, he can often be frightened or suggested into believing that he is, and ultimately into falling sick in good earnest.

The first thing to do, as the distribution of germs or fouling of the water-mains is ruled out by the law, is to employ the art of suggestion, in which the pill-vendor has had more occasion to perfect himself than that of healing, in order to create a morbid search for symptoms and so to reduce his victim to such a state that he may either be or imagine himself to be (it does not matter which) in need of a remedy. We have then to convince him, not by reason, but by assaulting him by day from hoardings and by night from sky signs that our remedy has been tried and tested for generations, that it represents the very last word of modern science, and that it is being thrown on the market for a tenth of its value.

Pictures will be exhibited of surging crowds, immaculately dressed, fighting each other to get at the pills, of full-bosomed nurses presenting them with a lascivious smirk, and of Socrates, described as the great Athenian sage, recommending them to his disciples.

You have then to get a needy doctor, or still better, such an expert as the actress or cricketer of the hour, to sign, for what money they can succeed in extracting, a letter such as public opinion expects a doctor or an actress or a cricketer to write, extolling the virtues of the pills. It matters not in the least that these opinions are well known to be written for money, the mere name of Georgette Sansmoral or

"Trump" Yorker will carry a conviction that lies too deep for argument. And so long as soap and bread last, the nasty compound will go down, in the most liberal sense, by the million.

So gullible is public opinion that when a medical journal, some time ago, published an analysis of a number of these concoctions, and exposed to the last grain and scruple their widely advertised pretensions, the public was stolidly unimpressed and the sale went on as merrily as ever.

So easy is it to manipulate public opinion in the cause of private interest. What applies in commerce at large holds good in that particular branch of it which is concerned in supplying the people with such printed matter as they can be induced to pay for.

The notion of a free and impartial press, sifting the false from the true, proving all things and holding fast that which is good, is thus seen to be the veriest chimera. And the problem of the press is complicated by another factor that is absent from most other business transactions. Those who supply the public with news have often other motives than that of selling as many of their goods for as big a profit as possible.

So great a power does the manipulation of public opinion confer, that it may often be to the ultimate advantage of rich and unscrupulous people to guide it to their own ends. And even without conscious collusion, there is an instinct of self-preservation among those with wealth to lose that makes them com-

bine as one man against anything that threatens to deprive them of it.

But even where such a sinister bias is absent, commerce and literature are now so intimately mixed as to render most matter that appears in print about as reliable a guide either in fact or opinion as a compass surrounded by a ring of powerful magnets.

It is not even as if the reader were the first person to be considered. To the modern editor his importance is second to that of the advertiser, and the reading matter is often little more than a decoy to lure the reader within range of the advertisements. And when the advertiser is the all-important but unseen power to be propitiated, it would be sheer madness to allow anything to get between the covers calculated to offend or drive him away.

Ask a newspaper to publish any attack upon a patent medicine or secret memory system that is generously advertised in its columns! You might as well expect the landlord of a public house to allow his premises to be used for propaganda purposes by Mr. Pussyfoot Johnson.

There is another handicap of a less obvious nature which necessarily tends to make organs of public opinion into blind leaders of the blind. They are not only fettered to the opinions of their proprietors, but to an insane and rigid consistency with their own. For though a journalist may drift from *Post* to *Herald,* from *Tablet* to *Tatler,* according to his gifts and the state of the market, yet for the duration of his employment with any particular organ he finds himself

saddled with a more awful infallibiity than many devout theists have imposed upon their Supreme Being. He is never allowed to form a candid or impartial estimate of any new situation that may arise. With him the verdict must always precede the trial. Whatever may happen only proves that he, or his paper, has been right all along.

Mr. Garvin of the *Observer,* perhaps the most statesmanlike and best informed of present-day leader writers, happens to hold a brief against the Poles. When, therefore, the Red Army is at the gates of Warsaw, and a dire catastrophe threatens Europe, it is forced on him to maintain that this necessary result of Polish Chauvinism will be no bad thing after all. And it is also necessary for him to push to lengths of more than ordinary disingenuousness that accursed word partition, in order to find excuse for forcing under Prussian rule communities of Poles who will fight to the death rather than submit.

"Let us be proved right," is the motto of journalism, "though the Heavens fall!" It matters not that Irish opinion has been inflamed to a madness of uncompromising hatred, largely by articles in the press twitting Irish Protestants with being wooden-gunned braggarts, Irish Catholics as unfit and even unwilling to govern themselves, and predicting the amenability of either side to a few vigorous kicks with the jack boot. It matters not that the predetermined championship, by certain organs of upper-class opinion, of General Dyer's khaki terror, has seriously endangered our Indian Empire.

The mere fact that we have excited untoward passions gives us a further excuse for abusing their owners, of showing how right we were all along in our Devil's work. And not the least of the tragedies connected with the war is the fact that an experience, which ought at least to have left one and all of us who survived changed and wiser beings, has in fact only served, as far as our press is concerned, to harden every prejudice and confirm every vulgar shibboleth.

Imperialists and free-traders, old liberals and young Tories—they are up and at it again as if the war had been some irrelevant interruption of their normal activities. If, like the Bourbons, they have neither learnt nor forgotten anything, it is because, at a time when it was vital to do both, the conditions under which they labour have forbidden them to do either.

How, under these circumstances, truth or sincerity can be expected to characterise modern journalism it is difficult to imagine, and, indeed, the only cause for surprise is that so much of real value does find its way into print, and that the English press is probably more free than any other from direct and cynical corruption. For in spite of every inducement to the contrary there is about the art of writing a dignity which impels some men to express the best that is in them for its own sake. But of the bulk of journalism it may fairly be said that it is shoddy of a more ephemeral quality than gets produced in most other businesses, for the reason that every man is able to find out sooner or later whether a tin of corned beef makes him ill or a pair of boots comes to pieces, but no one knows when

he is poisoning his mind and few think it worth bothering about. A craving for bad literature is like one for drink, the more harm the commodity does the more it is in demand.

To one who knows something of the inner working of journalism, the perusal of seemingly innocent and respectable printed matter is often something between a Chinese puzzle and a nightmare. Here is a book that you have just tossed aside as the most blatant of trash lauded to the skies as a work of heaven-inspired genius, and you are not surprised to find another column, on another page, openly advertising this same book and perhaps other products of the firm.

You then read an authoritative article on Traherne by a man of your acquaintance, an excellant fellow, whose initials are a middle-class household word, and you know why a week ago he asked you for the loan of "that fellow Trevaskis or Trelawney or whatever his name was that somebody resurrected a few years ago—I haven't had time to tackle him." Then you read a balanced but none the less damaging estimate of a public man with whom not the editor, but the proprietor of the group of papers to which his belongs, is out to get even.

Then comes a veracious account, by our Parliamentary correspondent, of how our high-minded and eloquent National Tapers have, as they have in every previous issue, crushed, flattened and annihilated the wretched Independent Tadpoles, and lastly you come to "Peeping Tom's corner," hinting at private

scandals whose publication in any form would be a wanton outrage were it not for your certain knowledge that the captain who was horsewhipped in the Row and the duchess who bathes naked in the moonlight have no originals save in the fertile brain of one of the staff.

But in calling attention to these developments of commercial anarchy, we must be careful to avoid the grave pitfall of allowing an exposure of the system to degenerate into an attack upon those who are less its agents than its victims. It would be a perversion of facts as inexcusable as any if we tried to brand the whole business community as a gang of thieves or all journalists as cynical liars deliberately poisoning the wells of public opinion.

There are certainly business men and journalists upon whom the respective caps would fit, but taken as a whole they are neither less honourable nor worthy of esteem than any other class of men. Many of them see and admit the evils of the system, and consider themselves, with some justice, more injured by it than anybody else. But few men can afford to emulate the conduct of the mad knight, and tilt at the windmills of a crazy society.

It is a natural instinct, when we disapprove of something intangible, to vent our wrath on somebody concrete, as modern research has shown the custom of unloading the sins of the community on some unfortunate animal to have been widespread among primitive peoples. We therefore talk of greedy capitalists and mean-spirited ink-slingers just as we once con-

sidered every wretched Prussian and Bavarian conscript as being somehow responsible for the murder of Miss Cavell and the sinking of the *Lusitania.*

But where competition sets the pace, the ordinary individual is powerless to stand aside. Consider the journalist struggling for his living in an overcrowded and by no means too well paid profession. It is not as if the editor or proprietor were to approach him with dazzling bribes which he could refuse with a proud gesture in the cause of the truth and his own soul. He is lucky indeed if all his energy and serviceableness to editors can find him a job at all, still more lucky if he can keep it when advancing years make it hard for him to compete with younger and more resourceful rivals.

Ask any editor or publisher how many papers he has seen fail or firms go bankrupt. They themselves are not arbitrary Olympians, lying beside their nectar and ruling the world of letters at their caprice, but men with homes to keep together and a standard of comfort to maintain, striving to keep their heads above the torrent which has drowned so many of their fellows.

In the limited world which is the sole reality for most of those who are making their living under modern conditions, the struggle for survival is at work in its most brutal form. By advertising a quack remedy some father may be enabling his sons to get the public-school substitute for education, and a smart piece of literary prostitution on the part of a husband will enable him to send his sick wife to the seaside.

There are few men who will so far sacrifice their self-respect as to admit that their compliance with these and similar necessities is incapable of defence. The pill-vendor is probably persuaded that his pill does some good and would do none at all if it were not cried up as loudly as other by no means superior preparations—all that is part of the game. The man who writes some trashy article or insincere review reflects that the public is getting the only sort of thing it is capable of appreciating, and that this is better than no mental pabulum at all.

It is less the love than the need of money that is at the root of most modern evil. But our disinclination to lay the blame on individuals need not blind us to the dangers of a money-ridden and anarchic civilisation. For if the most important thing in life is to get right with reality, anything that forces us to live in a world of lies and pretence must be a peril of the direst magnitude. Most of our knowledge of reality is derived not from what we see but from the written experience of others, and if these others are interested in making us see and feel, by proxy, the thing that is not, our condition is no better than that of the blind.

We lose our capacity of distinguishing between what is reality and what is not, and we move about in a dream world, though it is a doubtful question whether, like Alice through the Looking Glass, we are in our own or somebody else's dream.

The supreme question of modern times is whether the new power that mankind has acquired over matter is going to provide it with the means of progress or

suicide. We have already dwelt upon the crude but imminent dangers of war and revolution, dangers that can only be avoided by the opening of our eyes to the new order of reality and the adaptation of our individual and collective lives to its requirements. But the very recklessness with which our fathers allowed the new situation to take charge of itself is an evil that tends to its own perpetuation.

The further we wander into the morass, the thicker grow the mists around us and more deceptive gleam the false lights to prevent us from ever getting back to the true path again. Whether civilisation can be saved depends upon our realising in time what the danger is, and the first thing to do is regain our capacity for seeing the truth and to find some means of countering the vested interests of our present anarchy in blinding us to reality.

CHAPTER IV

THE REIGN OF TRIVIALITY

WE are accustomed, and not altogether without reason, to make light of the pretensions of our Victorian grandfathers. We have seen how tragically these self-satisfied people missed the opportunity presented to them of bringing life into line with the wholly new order of reality created by the advent of machinery.

There was enough humbug in all conscience behind its solemnity, but in fairness we must admit that at least in one important respect the age possessed an advantage over the one that succeeded it. Its solemnity was frequently the cloak for a real, if narrow and misdirected, earnestness and concentration.

The Victorians were the most unremitting of workers, they took life with an admirable if ponderous seriousness. And they did, with all their deficiencies of delicacy and humour, produce work of an enduring quality that seems quite beyond the scope of our own daily discovered and press-shaking geniuses.

That mid-Victorian age was the time when Dickens, Tennyson, Darwin and a score of others, hardly their inferiors, were at their zenith, when those two rival colossi, Disraeli and Gladstone, were be-

striding the world of politics, and when the horizon was bright with the rising stars of Swinburne, Meredith and Matthew Arnold.

It will hardly be maintained, by the most optimistic defenders of our present time, that in sustained, architectonic quality we can produce anything to compare with the products of an age at which it is too easy to laugh. Compared with theirs, our ideals are trivial and our work flimsy. And yet the seeds of whatever defects our age may possess were planted only too surely in the one that preceded it.

In proportion as life drifts away from reality do its own processes become fitful and uncertain. We can easily find excuses for saving ourselves trouble when we create a dream world in the image of our desires. The reckless individualism which flourished in the middle of the last century had made it in everybody's interest to distort the facts of life in his neighbour's eyes, and the process of poisoning the wells of truth began to manifest its inevitable effects as the nineteenth century waxed old.

The blight of triviality descended upon no nation so much as England, whose insular position had rendered her immune from the stimulus of foreign danger, and whose long start in industrial prosperity had induced her to slacken her energy and even to neglect the vital necessity for education.

Men and nations who will not grow up and face the responsibilities of their position, naturally like to continue playing like children as long as possible, and no less noticeable than the decreasing seriousness about

work was the deadly and increasing earnestness about play that characterised the new age.

Hitherto games had been more or less casual and unorganised amusements, the upper class preferring rather to keep up the old warfare between man and beast in its increasingly degenerate form of sport than to stimulate artificially the competitive spirit between man and man except in the prize-fights which were less games than miniature tournaments in an age when boxing was a real art of self-defence, and even so respectable a middle-class gentleman as Mr. Snodgrass might find occasion to take off his coat in warning of a weighty though by no means precipitate resolution that he was going to begin.

Games in those days were pastimes, incredible as such levity may sound in these days of test-matches and international golf, and were played in a spirit that was seldom more than half serious, unless weighted by heavy bets.

Readers of "Tom Brown's Schooldays" will remember how—horrible to relate—the bowler who dismissed Jack Raggles in a school match so far forgot himself as playfully to toss the ball on to the batsman's retreating back. We can as easily imagine, nowadays, Marshal Foch digging one of the German delegates in the ribs on his signing the terms of the armistice.

The motto of too many of us nowadays is the inspiring "play while you work and work while you play." Such a trifle as the South African war was not even allowed to ruffle the surface of the sporting

world and it was not uncommon even for those engaged in it to display more interest in sporting than in military vicissitudes.

When the most popular poet of the day permitted himself to say in his wrath things that certainly erred in being rude and intemperate about the devotees of games, he was greeted with a chorus of horrified protest, not because he had been rude and intemperate, for that had never before had an adverse effect upon his popularity, but because he had refused to bow down before the flannelled and muddied fetish that all classes of his countrymen had united in setting up.

Even if the old cock-and-bull story about Wellington and the playing fields of Eton has been long ago exploded, everybody is aware of the many things that can be said, and most of them with some measure of truth, in favour of playing games—that it is a healthy relaxation from work, that it is a school of manly virtues, that it inculcates courage, self-sacrifice and self-control, that it improves the physique of the nation and that all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.

These arguments, we repeat, are not without a measure of truth, and nobody but a curmudgeon would want to deprive himself or anybody else of an occasional day's enjoyment on the cricket field or the links. But on examination it will be found that they have only a strictly limited application, and by no means hold good for the whole or even the greater part of the field which is covered by the games spirit nowadays.

We wonder, for instance, whether the Oval would be considered as a particularly promising forcing ground of the manly virtues, when the captains of the opposing teams in a Test Match have to inspect the wickets under police protection, and when a crowd assembles outside the Australians' dressing room threatening in indescribable language to drag them out.

Any one who knows the atmosphere of a modern race-course must sometimes wonder whether the human spirit is being trained for the battlefield or the gaol. We would ask whether the average golfer or tennis player is appreciably more unselfish and better tempered than other men, and somehow one fails to visualise a company of jolly golfers assembled round a bowl of punch at the end of a hard day's driving and putting.

Cricket may be a healthy relaxation of the mind, but how about the bridge of dread that spans house parties up to three in the morning? There is an all-important distinction between a relaxation from work and a substitute for it, and the saw about all work and no play needs to be taken in conjunction with its ear-rasping sequel that all play and no work gives Jack a ragged shirt.

To play games occasionally and in the right spirit is beyond question a joyous and healthy thing, but to treat them as ends in themselves and to permit them to compete with the serious interests of life is an act of degenerate frivolity that bodes ill for the nation wherein it has become habitual. It evinces distaste

for reality in its most extreme form. A wholly artificial set of interests must be created, the things about which we get anxious or excited must be things of no moment to anybody except those who make a living out of them.

I remember many years ago now, buying an evening paper at the crossing of Baker Street and Marylebone Road, in order to obtain the first definite news of the great naval battle which was known to have been fought in the Sea of Japan. I had scarcely started reading it when I was accosted by a decently dressed person in a bowler who asked me, in agitated tones, whether I could kindly inform him who had won.

I started to read him the brief words of the official dispatch, to the effect that a decisive victory had been won, a fleet, whose proceedings had for months held the world in suspense, destroyed, and thousands of men sent to the bottom of the sea. But my questioner's face took on a puzzled expression, and then the vague resentment of a man who feels that he is somehow being made a fool of.

"I didn't mean anything about all that," he said, "I was asking about the race."

Luckily I was able to satisfy him by referring him to the stop-press column, which informed an expectant nation that Cicero had won the Derby. My questioner had been plainly unable to conceive that a sane man could imagine one of his fellow countrymen to regard the Derby as an event of lesser importance

than a battle which might prove to be the turning point in the relations of East and West.

Our examination, in the last chapter, of the competitive spirit so powerfully stimulated by the anarchy of our response to the industrial revolution, will enable us to appreciate the significance of this last diseased growth of it upon the social organism.

If the Victorians so little understood the heritage of mechanical power into which they had come as to waste it recklessly and employ it for purposes of mutual injury, they had at least enough sense of reality to compete with each other about things that really mattered.

It was thus that, in spite of the heritage of evil which they had received and to which they were constantly adding to pass on to their children, they were enabled to accomplish so great a quantity of solid and enduring work. But as time went on, competition itself suffered a partial divorce from reality and men began to fight for goals instead of territories and get the better of each other in their scores as keenly as in their bank accounts.

This may suggest one counterbalancing advantage that may certainly be claimed for the worship of games and the cult of trivial things in general. Where competition is doing actual harm, the artificial kind is at least a less powerful engine of mischief than the real. How much better it would be for everybody concerned, except the profiteers and the generals, if the quarrels of nations could be fought out with pea-shooters between armies of tin soldiers!

It is saner that England and Ireland should want to beat each other with footballs than with bullets. And when a suicidal class squabble like the coal strike is at its height it is better that the miner should vote the *Dreadnought Communiser* a bore, and care more about a good report of the Cup Tie than the doctrines of the Third International. Unreality may at least have its uses as a safety valve.

But the merely negative advantage that sheer futility may possess over positive mischief is a poor enough defence for it as a national cult. At best it may postpone the evil day. For the deadliness of futility lies in the confusion that it makes of all values. It is bad enough not to see the thing that is real, but it is worse not to want to see it. To be frivolous as a relaxation may often mask an enlightened seriousness of purpose, but this is not the spirit with which we are at present concerned.

Listen to the conversation that has to take place at any average party between those who cannot for the moment be jammed into some contest, whether of tennis, bridge, putting, croquet or snooker, according to time and opportunity. It will, in the intervals between the discussion of the weather and of these or other games, drift off to matters which are disposed of with a levity and matter-of-courseness nothing short of appalling.

"It is awfully hot to-day."

"Yes, awfully, isn't it? So dry for the courts."

"Yes, isn't it? Isn't it awful about Ireland?"

"Yes, awfully, but Sir Dunder Head told my sister

that it'll be quite all right now that we can send a proper army to deal with them."

"Oh, rather, none of them really want to go on . . . the priests, you know . . . the courts are playing quite true really."

"Awfully, aren't they? I wonder whether the champion really was ill!"

"Poor girl! one can't think how awful it must be for her to get beaten in a match like that."

"Yes, awful, mustn't it? I always think we ought to make allowances. I say, are you going to the bazaar for the General Dyer Tip fund?"

"I don't know. I suppose one ought to . . . all those poor women and children. . . . The courts are jolly green for the time of year."

"Yes, it's awfully hot, isn't it?"

"Awfully."

Or perhaps the talk may drift off to the unemployed who are of course only walking the streets because they are too lazy to work, and those horrid doles, which are causing such a lot of mischief, and the paid Bolshevik agitators who are at the bottom of everything and, "do you know, my dear, that two of poor Colonel Backsight's labourers have joined one of those horrid unions, when you know how no one can afford. . . ."

But perhaps we are giving the impression that the reign of triviality is confined to one class only and the reader is anticipating, with more or less pleasurable feelings, the dissection of the sins and secret horrors of "smart society" according to the time-honoured

programme. This is always a popular move, because most people, in default of experience, like to have their imagination tickled with the glamour and dalliance of the Prophet's Paradise that they imagine to exist somewhere within the confines of Mayfair and Belgravia.

We have even read, in one of our most reliable organs of daily enlightenment, an account of a splendid mansion at which the members of this society meet for the promiscuous gratification of their refined but lascivious instincts, and of the not unnatural embarrassment of a young gentleman on finding that his partner for the evening happened to be his hostess of the previous day, one of the best known and popular hostesses, so we were credibly informed, in all London.

One wonders from what lady with a duster or gentleman with a salver the purveyors of such information about society derive their authority.

The worst of such attacks is that so far from opening people's eyes, they have no relation to anything that exists, and therefore allow the real case against what they call society to go by default. For, in the sense in which it was used in the fifties and sixties, and is still used to-day by people who would be ready to raise their *Nunc Dimittis* once to have lunched with a mayor who has been knighted for his public spirit in receiving royalty at a cattle show, society has ceased to exist.

There is no longer a compact and exclusive body of people, maintaining a certain standard of manners

and culture and all more or less acquainted with each other. The flood of newly-acquired wealth has long ago broken down the barriers of birth and breeding, every one who has money to spend may count upon a sufficiency of friends of the most unexceptionable quality and upon purchasing an attractive looking girl of the best antecedents to share his name and bedroom.

People form their own sets, according to their needs, assets and inclinations, and most of them who have daughters to dispose of go through a certain customary and monotonous routine, little differing in principle from that of the Arab bazaar, where the raw material for the seraglio is exhibited with somewhat greater frankness of intention.

The real case against the disconnected groups that are lumped together under the heading of society is not that their members bask in an atmosphere of splendid vice, for their lives are quite frequently marked by the dullest respectability and a piety of the most old-fashioned, not to say bigoted type. It is that their way of life is nearly as objectless and, to use the slang expression that exactly hits it off, "footling," as that of the worthy people in villas who think that the whole duty of man is humbly to persevere in the imitation of those ladies, whose smiles and shoulders are so alluringly exposed for their edification on the front page of the *Maunderer*.

Even where, for want of a more intelligent ideal, rich people consciously aim at being thought fast, it is probable that few of them have the courage of their

incontinence and that, in all but a few exceptional cases, immorality is kept within the bounds prescribed by custom and the marriage rite.

But to talk of "footling" as if it were the monopoly of Mayfair is to display that very capacity of taking dreams for realities which is the worst feature of our time. It is assumed that because the manual labourer and artisan, to whom is strangely appropriated the exclusive title of "working man," is nearer to the physical necessities of life, he has therefore a greater sense of reality than that possessed by other classes.

Those whose experience it was to serve in the ranks during the Great War must have suffered, if they were capable of it, a startling disillusionment in this respect. There is perhaps no place where the conversation is so entirely futile as a barrack-room, unless it be, perhaps, a servants' hall. It was the exception, rather than the rule, to find a private with the vaguest interest in or knowledge of what he was, with a marvellous cheerfulness and stoicism, prepared to give his life in maintaining.

The great topic of conversation was nearly always that of food, a joke about "rissoles" would be sure to ripple down a platoon on the march quite irrespective of merit. The performances of Chelsea and Tottenham Hotspur were discussed with more knowledge and interest than those of the Tsar's armies or a besieged British garrison in Mesopotamia.

It is perhaps the lack of imagination displayed by the British Tommy which accounts for his proverbial incapability of knowing when he is beaten. He will,

when holding an isolated trench in nearly hopeless circumstances, go on calmly taking an occasional shot, and joking to his surviving comrades about matters of the greatest indifference.

The disaster on the Aisne of 1917 drove even the poilus to sporadic mutiny, every nation that took a prolonged part in the war found its moral going at one time or another, with the solitary exception of the British. The utmost disaster and a stupidity that merged on the criminal in the way he was driven to the shambles could not affect the spirits of Tommy or, for that matter, of Tommy's officer. The soldier might know, and certainly imagined that he knew that some one had blundered, but the offender was more probably his platoon sergeant than the commander-in-chief, and for blundering the sufficient remedy was a grouse.

Never during the whole war, not when Von Kluck was thundering on his tracks from Mons to the Marne, did he grouse to such an extent as when, on the conclusion of the armistice, he made his triumphant march to the Rhine, because on that occasion he outmarched his supplies and the actual loss of his food was a reality that touched him nearer than the probable blundering away of the war.

This would be a state of mind not only heroic but entirely sufficient if the object of life were merely to stick out a wearisome and dangerous job that some one has told you to do. The so-called working man has no doubt a shrewd enough sense of such realities as immediately concern him, and within his own lim-

ited purview no amount of humbug and fine speaking will turn him away from the facts. But outside that all too narrow circle, he neither can nor will see.

He knows well enough whether the boss or foreman with whom he is in immediate contact is treating him fairly or not, but get him into some national dispute and he will back what happens to be his side with as unreasoning an obstinacy as he supports his county at cricket or his country against the Jerrys.

He will vote the discussion of the subject a bore, and yet if his distracted leaders, seeing the case hopeless and starvation ahead, trust to his balloting them out of the difficulty, they are wofully mistaken. Cursing them and the employers and the strike generally he will, if he condescends to use his ballot paper at all, in the great majority of cases put his cross for no surrender, and trudge back to his foodless cottage satisfied that at any rate he has done the right thing for his side.

If you want to know exactly what reality means to the workman, you have only to read one of the enormous and dirt-cheap publications which those who cater for his tastes and help to form them turn out weekly by the million, and from which he derives his knowedge of the world.

There will be a scanty, but usually garbled and inaccurate gleaning of the foreign and Parliamentary intelligence, and perhaps one leader written obviously from the point of view of a man of limited education addressing others of none, and consisting of a few villainously worded platitudes. All this will take up

considerably less space than the sporting intelligence, which is rendered in a wonderful and complex jargon obviously intended to give the impression that the authors both have seen and understand the events they are turned on to write up in the office.

Perhaps the *pièce de résistance* will be the autobiography of a crack cricketer or a cracksman of a different kind, even of a real murderer. And you wonder how honest Trump Yorker and Bill Sikes have suddenly blossomed out into a style as facile and flowery, and indeed exactly similar to that of the trained gentlemen who provide the rest of the intellectual banquet.

The remainder of the paper is devoted to the most fetid and prurient sensations that can be worked up from an inaccurate research into the details of human vice and suffering.

If we aspire to anything higher than the rewards of a demagogue servility, we had better clear our minds of the cant that a lower class consisting mainly of board-school educated town-dwellers is distinguished from others by its greater sense of reality or desire to acquire it. Any one who thinks so has only to listen to what they say or to study what they read.

There is no greater victim of shoddy and commercial humbug than the workman and his family. It is at them that the vendor of patent medicines directs his most obvious wiles, it is in them that the tipster and the three-card trickster find their victims, it is they who will go into raptures about the most impudent travesties of life on the cinema. We refer to the

majority; for the exceptions, on whom the hope of the future so largely depends, are not yet sufficiently numerous to leaven the whole lump.

But if both the upper and lower ranks of society have alike fallen under the blight of triviality, what of that large and ill-defined class that stands between the two?

Of its lower ranks, the tradesmen, the clerks, those who occupy various minor positions in the commercial or business world, it is unnecessary to treat except in so far as to say that what was postulated of the workman applies to them with such modification as may be due to a slightly greater smattering of education, a pathetic yearning for cheap culture and a sense of incomplete gentility which hinders every effort to unite in their own interests. They are mostly too busy struggling for survival in the competitive arena to have any time to spare for looking about them.

But when we speak of a middle class we are most inclined to visualise that large community of the black-coated that has grown up in recent times in the suburbs of the great towns and provides the typical man and woman whose tastes and personality are all in all to the majority of the daily as distinguished from the weekly newspapers, and whose demand all but the cheapest and crudest forms of art and literature are intended to supply.

The upper and labouring classes we had with us before ever the coming of the machines revolutionised modern life. But the suburban class, such as we know it to-day, is almost entirely the product of that

revolution and the competitive anarchy which succeeded it. There was certainly a middle class long before the machines, but one altogether different in character and traditions and filling a less important place in the social order.

Even the middle class that Dickens interpreted with such wonderful sympathy is as extinct as the monasteries in England. Those formidable old coves, with tempers of pepper and hearts of gold, with whose lineaments we are so familiar in the drawings of Leech and Cruikshank have no counterparts in the villas and offices of our own day.

What distinguishes these Dickens' heroes is their large absence of snobbery, Mr. Brownlow and even Scrooge would never have considered it the height of bliss to have been admitted to the mansion of Sir Leicester Dedlock. We have some inkling of the change in ideals that was perceptible towards the end of Dickens' career in the picture of the Veneering household, and the creation of du Maurier's Mrs. Ponsonby de Tomkyns in the 'eighties may be said to mark a turning point in English history. The new middle class had come into its own.

It was a class distinguished from all others by its entire absence of pride and traditions. It is not without significance that the chief difficulty in forming a middle-class union is the unwillingness of any one to admit that he or she belongs to the middle class.

The inhabitants of the most jerry-built villas are all ladies and gentlemen of an unexceptionable brand.

The intonations of their vowels, their habits of social intercourse, are ruled by an adoring imitation of the mysterious and largely non-existent entity they know as society.

The periodical denunciations of smart sins written by earnest clerks for their edification not only are sure of a profitable circulation in villadom, but have even been rumoured to have produced an appreciable increase of minor viciousness among the wives and daughters of our city men.

It is, in fact, among the women of this class that its most characteristic features are developed. The men are after all held too rigorously to their daily avocations in the competitive mill to make their personalities much felt. And a life even of wasteful and misdirected toil is a more natural and healthy thing than a round of monotonous idleness and pretence, such as falls to the lot of the strenuously ladylike ladies who give what orders they dare to the mere women who perform the grudging and inefficient service of cleaning their homes and calling them "mum."

It is among these that triviality attains its most extravagant development. Indeed, it is not easy to conceive how any contact with reality is possible in a life so monotonously artificial. Bad as any sham may be, the imitation of a sham must be accounted worse.

These rows of badly built yet pretentious dwellings with the tyranny of snobbish convention that pervades them give their inhabitants the choice of submitting themselves body and soul to what must be, to

any one possessed of the least independence of mind, boredom unimaginable. Most of them submit, but at the price of all capacity for seeing things with their own eyes. Some of them are driven into a revolt which is equally extravagant and futile.

Every sort of crazy and bizarre cult finds, as long as it is new, its most zealous devotees among the women of the suburbs. Sometimes they will pose as the allies of a lower class that despises them at heart; sometimes they will sport an aura and take on half-a-dozen romantic but rather naughty previous existences; sometimes their energies have found a more strenuous outlet in discharging stones at windows and saliva at statesmen. But this reaction from vanity is also vanity, it has no relation to any reality except the desire to escape from an existence rightly intolerable to an intelligent being.

It was for members of this class that the vilest of all attempts to escape from the realities of war was provided in the press; the motto of snobbery and pettiness as usual was almost openly adopted in more than one illustrated periodical whose success caused abundant imitation.

At a time when the services of every man and woman were urgently needed in the fight for freedom it is almost incredible that war-work for women could be openly scoffed at as only fit for dowdies, and that it should be more than hinted at that a really smart woman would find more opportunities for pleasure and the gratification of her carnal affections than ever before.

A picture of the fashionable and virtuous heroine sprawling in the embraces of a goatish general while the serious war-workers toiled disconsolately in the next room must have been extremely encouraging for those whose sacrifice for the cause was often thankless enough without the humiliation of feeling that they were only butts for their pains. Nor can the duties of provost marshals have been lightened by the strenuous efforts to persuade newly-joined officers, who were naturally anxious to be as like the genuine article as possible, that the happy warrior whom every officer and gentleman should wish to be was a chinless ass addicted to the unlimited enjoyment of "bubbly" and his friends' wives.

These imaginary beau-ideals were of 'course assumed to be aristocrats of the bluest blood, but their place of birth was nearer to Ealing than to Portman Square and they had most honour in their own native suburbia.

We have deliberately put the triviality that pervades not only one but all classes of modern society in as strong a light as possible in order to make it clear in what the peril to our civilisation consists. But we are well aware that this is not the whole case, for then it would be waste of time to diagnose a disease that there could be no prospect of curing.

There are grounds, that it is now time to elucidate, for hoping that this state of things, alarming as it undoubtedly is, may be transitory, that the worst has already been passed and that, with the determination

to understand and remedy the evil, it may not only be surmounted, but that mankind may for the first time enter upon the use and enjoyment of the heritage that its conquest over nature has prepared for it.

CHAPTER V

GROUNDS OF HOPE

EVEN when the Victorian age was at its height of self-satisfaction there were not wanting voices, and those of the sweetest and most powerful, to proclaim that all was not well, that civilisation was, to use the vivid phrase of Carlyle, shooting Niagara, without any sense or study of its dangers. It is, indeed, almost startling to contrast the robust optimism of the average man of that time with the apprehension and gloom that weighed upon so many of its leading spirits.

Even the courtliness and sentimentality of Tennyson is not proof against it, the mind of the dying Arthur is clouded by the same doubt which is the insistent *motif* of that most poignant of all elegies, *In Memoriam*. The robustness of Dickens is not proof towards the end of his life against an increasing dissatisfaction with the shams and cruelties of the social system.

The key to the vicissitudes of Newman's career is to be found in the fact that his unrivalled intellectual honesty had opened his eyes to the reality of his time, and that his sensitive soul could not bear the vision. He fled to the Roman church as the only complete and logical refuge from reality, but even within the fold

his restless spirit could not find peace, and his ears were troubled by the questionings which, with terrific fairness, he allowed the demons of Hell to shout at the passing soul of Gerontius. The line between the extremes of faith and scepticism is oftentimes as thin as a hair.

In the later Victorians the note of revolt against their age becomes completely self-conscious. The pre-Raphaelite group were either in flight from its ugliness or in open attack upon its social system, and in Swinburne's earlier poems it is difficult to say whether the thunder of rebellion or shriek of despair is the predominant note.

Matthew Arnold, the sad apostle of a culture without hope or goal, arraigned the commercial system and its champions with deadly sarcasm. And then came those like Walter Pater and the American Whistler who desired nothing better, in their art, than to shake off from their feet the dust of a reality against which they revolted. Some who, like William Morris, dreamed of reform, did so as if conscious that the land of their desire was indeed Nowhere, and their true calling that of

"The idle singer of an empty day."

It was something at any rate for its best spirits to realise that all was not well with that age of complacency, that to struggle like brutes with the powers of civilised men was nothing better than drifting to the Devil. And it is not so far a step from this conviction of sin to the positive conclusion that it is not

only within the power of mankind to regulate their own destinies, but that this is an imperative duty which they will neglect at their peril.

The strange mysticism that had counselled leaving as much as possible alone in the faith that universal greed would make all things work together for the good of those who loved money began to command a diminished allegiance as the nineteenth century grew old. The authority of the "classical" political economy of which John Stuart Mill, following in the footsteps of Ricardo, had been the almost unquestioned high-priest, had suffered a severe blow when Mill was honest enough publicly to admit himself mistaken in one of the cardinal doctrines of the "science."

In the 'seventies arose another economist, Jevons, who was bold enough to maintain that Ricardo and Mill were able but misguided men who had been altogether wrong in the essentials of their teaching.

These economic interchanges had their importance as marking the breakdown of what, during the middle of the century, had seemed the almost infallible dogmatism of what was known as the Manchester school of which Cobden, Roebuck and Bright had been the most admired representatives in the world of politics, and to which Gladstone had succeeded in giving practical expression in his financial and social policy.

From this time forth there began to be an increasing sense that mankind could not order its affairs merely by letting them slide, and that some sort of

collective effort was necessary if actual disaster is to be averted. What form this effort should take was a matter of divergent opinion. The continental socialists, who took their lead from Karl Marx, believed that the whole machinery of production should be in the hands of those who actually worked it, and that it should be administered for their benefit.

The striking success of Prussia in effecting the union of Germany had enhanced the prestige of what, in English phrase, can best be described as an extreme Toryism, based upon divine right and the ability of the government to organise the whole nation in peace as an army is trained in war, in order to maintain and impose on others its ideal of racial culture.

It was in the 'nineties that the Prussian doctrine obtained a temporary vogue in England, in the form of an imperialism that regarded other races as lesser breeds without the scope of a law which was only Prussian culture translated into English.

Crude and mischievous as such notions may have been in themselves, they were at least attempts to do something, even a wrong thing, in preference to letting matters drift.

Naturally the vogue which Darwin's theory obtained, largely owing to a ridiculous agitation among clergymen who attributed the authorship of some Semitic legends to the Supreme Being, had induced a good deal of vague talk about natural selection, based on the assumption that it was the whole duty of man to be as much like a beast as possible. But it soon began to be discovered that a biological theory,

transplanted from its native science, can be made to support any cause whatever, with appropriate manipulation.

Besides, though Darwin himself from being a devil of the pit had been exalted into a fetish of orthodoxy, there were not wanting those who, like Samuel Butler, perceived that even as a biologist his main thesis was neither so original nor above question as his devotees made out. Poor Darwin, the most modest of men, had been dragged from his deliberately chosen obscurity of a scientific worker to figure as the champion of causes in which he was never interested, and a protagonist in controversies which he deplored.

In John Bunyan's allegory of life the first stage on the way to salvation is when the man clothed in rags realises that he has a great burden on his back, and breaks into a lamentable cry of "What shall I do?"

The people of the *fin de siècle* may at least claim to have discovered these two things, first that there was a burden to be removed and next that there was something to be done. They no longer believed that all was increasingly for the best in the best of all possible worlds, and that you had only got to give everybody his head and selfishness would do the rest.

The man in rags was at least beginning to look round anxiously for the wicket gate, and to seek for a guide, though this guide was more likely to be Mr. Worldly Wiseman or even Apollyon than Evangelist.

It was becoming evident that unrestrained greed

was not the talisman that the worthy Victorians had imagined it. It was not much good pointing to the advantages of competition when the competitors refused to compete. In America an almost unlimited anarchy of private enterprise had led to industrial despotism in its extreme form of trusts. Even the cartels of stage-ridden Germany, though harnessing competition effectually enough, were loose and democratic by comparison.

Signs of the trust spirit were becoming increasingly apparent in England. And along with this self-stultification of the competitive ideal, there were ominous signs of a world-wide revolt against it on the part of those who served the machines for hire, and who were beginning to discover that whoever benefited from all this accumulation of power, their own lot was to provide, in the most wasteful manner conceivable, a surplus of luxury for others and for themselves the means, if they were sufficiently lucky to get employment, of buying just enough shoddy to eke out a toilsome and ignoble existence.

The great dock strike of 1889 was a reminder, which only those wilfully blind could disregard, that Labour unrest was a disease that would kill if it could not be cured, and that the best way to cure it was not to throw physic to the dogs and pretend that nothing was the matter.

Even in the Liberal party itself, the stronghold of Gladstone and Cobden, the individualist orthodoxy was wavering. The so-called Newcastle programme was a recognition, however imperfect, that merely

negative measures would not avail to get society out of the ruts.

The last decade of the century, the "naughty 'nineties" as it is sometimes called, was a period of remarkable, if indecisive, intellectual activity. Everybody who thought at all seemed to agree that something ought to be done, and no one was certain what that something ought to be.

On the one hand the new suburban class had raised the quest for triviality to fever pitch. It was a time of fussy ornament in tasteless profusion, of an equally fussy overdress and a shallow routine of badinage of which a very little was apt to prove more wearisome than the heaviest sententiousness of the 'sixties. But even these distressing symptoms may have masked some faint aspirations after beauty and originality, they at any rate represented a state of social instability out of which good as well as evil might emerge. A restless and a mocking age is not the most favourable for a complacent idol-worship.

It is probable that when, if ever, an adequate estimate of these times comes to be a part of history, the two most significant British figures of the 'nineties will be Mr. Rudyard Kipling and Mr. Bernard Shaw. Each of these, in his own way, stands for a genuine if incomplete effort to resume touch with reality.

Mr. Kipling found his reality in the new growth of the Empire. He preferred to visualise stern, unemotional men in daily contact with the coarse facts of life—war, the government of races supposed to be inferior, and roughing it round the world at large.

The figure of the slouch-hatted colonial, out all day in the open air, aggressively bluff and manly, had an irresistible attraction for men whose horizon was limited by their office walls and the genteel roofs and chimneys that formed the skyline of their native street. To most of these poor city pilgrims the idea of the illimitable veldt or the calling temple bells came as a message to prisoners out of a brave reality from which they were forever barred.

Mr. Shaw is not, like Mr. Kipling, a poet, and he was more concerned in exposing the sordidness and squalor of the world around him than in painting dream-pictures of a paradise somewhere East of Suez, or amid trumpet-orchids in the Pacific. Of constructive faculty he is almost entirely deficient, in spite of his part in the middle-class socialism without tears that was christened Fabian, after an old Roman burgher whose methods of war earned him the name of "The dawdler."

When Mr. Shaw aspires to build, his schemes usually end either in absurdity or a frank *non-possumus*. He wrote a play about the marriage problem in which his characters talk for three of the longest hours on record and finally decide that not much can be done after all; his only hope for the future, to judge by his last book, is that somebody may suddenly discover, for no reason whatever except that he has once read of the possibility in a book, that he is going to live for three-hundred years instead of three-score and ten.

Mr. Shaw's love for impotent conclusions is an

almost universal feature of his plays, and his life force, which behaves like a person and consigns John Tanner to the python-like embraces of Ann, is perhaps the most unconvincing *deus ex machina* ever brought upon the stage.

But as a purely destructive critic, an iconoclast, Mr. Shaw's genius, particularly in his earlier plays, falls not far short of his own estimate. He looked upon the civilisation of his time, and upon its moral and conventional foundations and, behold, it was about as bad as it could be. The respectability of the Victorians that survived even the occasional overthrow of their religion was itself exposed as the veriest humbug.

There is not a little in common between Voltaire in the eighteenth century and Mr. Shaw at the end of the nineteenth. Neither was capable of pointing the way to a new order of things, but by applying the corrosive acid of their irreverence to all the supports of the old, they at least helped to clear the way for those who should come after them.

As the journalist and the intellectual mountebank began to prevail more and more over the genius in Mr. Shaw, his abiding title to fame tended to be forgotten, which is that in the minds of multitudes, to whom he is little more than a name, has arisen a disposition to tear aside the veils of convention that men have drawn between themselves and reality, to regard not what is supposed to be but what is, and to look upon life as a power capable of shaping its own destinies in accordance with an intelligent ideal.

The sentimental and un-English version of Imperialism current in the 'nineties lost its glamour during the long anti-climax of the South African war.

The clerks and music-hall patrons who shouted *Soldiers of the Queen* had reckoned upon having a war after their own hearts, a stern, spectacular and safe affair, with an army corps rolling over the veldt and the few dirty old ruffians who besprinkled it, one or two dramatically complete victories (and here all the clerks set their lips in quiet determination to wash out in blood Mr. Gladstone's defeat at Majuba) by generals fit to stand along with other heroes of the playing field as imperial super-men, historic regiments and dear, rough, child-like Tommies not unlike Mulvaney, Ortheris and Learoyd.

Never was there a ruder awakening. The generals proved, in too many instances, merely muddle-headed old men who performed miracles of incompetence and quarrelled publicly among themselves in dispatches, the historic regiments were brave, but no match for the Boers in their own country, and the Tommies, who soon got sick to death of their job, generally preferred laying down their arms when in a hopeless position to the last cartridge and drop of blood affair exacted by the music-hall convention.

Finally Mr. Kipling himself, a greater genius than either his admirers or detractors imagine, inflicted the most unkindest cut of all by trouncing the fathomless power and iron pride of middle-class imperialism in lines of scorching contempt.

We were more fortunate than Prussia in having

this hectoring spirit pricked in time. The dozen years that intervened between the little and the great war seem, in retrospect, like an incredible dream. The bastard imperialism of the 'nineties had followed the respectable anarchy of the 'sixties to the limbo of discredited ideals. The labour unrest had meanwhile taken a distinct turn for the worse owing to a slight rise in prices with which wages failed to keep pace.

Social reform was in the air, and a political faction which pledged itself to a bold and generous programme was returned to power in a record majority of comfortably off gentlemen. But a series of formidable strikes, though these were adroitly enough circumvented, warned those who cared to listen that to secure the machinery of representation was not enough—the workmen were beginning to look for their salvation in another place than the House of Commons.

Meanwhile the pursuit of frivolity had attained a pace that even those engaged in it must have felt was too furious to last. The death of the good old Queen, whose noblest achievement it had been to have purged the sink of the Georgian court, produced a violent reaction against Victorian respectability among those whom the competitive lottery had provided with money to throw about, but who lacked the responsibilities of tradition or breeding.

To some of the foremost of these, doors that had hitherto been obstinately closed were now flung open, and this was the signal for an orgy of plutocracy in high places which, though lacking the highly

coloured wickedness enviously attributed to it, was not only to the last degree vapid and silly, but swelled the rising tide of class bitterness by its insolent ostentation.

For, indeed, the doings of these pre-war days were dreamlike in their very lack of coherence and intelligible purpose. Freak dinners were provided by rich men who seemed at a sheer loss how to get rid of their money, cotillions were danced in which favours were distributed worth hundreds of pounds, a ridiculous travesty of a mediæval tournament was enacted, with real aristocrats as the principal buffoons, and it was seriously proposed to follow this up by turning part of a plaster-pleasure-ground into a temporary jungle in which the tame animals of a menagerie would be encountered by dauntless millionaire shikaris.

In a slightly lower stratum, the hysterical extravagances of the suffragettes were allowed to run their lawless course amid the complacent grins of a public only too grateful for any new sensation. The cult of games was pursued with an intensity now withdrawn from the older religion, which had to be "gingered up" by theological "stunts," not to speak of magic and necromancy.

It was like the masque imagined by Edgar Allan Poe in which the music grew wilder and wilder amid the fantastically bedizened rooms, as hour by hour the apprehension increased of something unguessed-at yet inevitable that should end the revels of the night in silence and the Red Death.

Anxious watchers on the Continent, calculating the hour in which it would be safe to strike, came to the conclusion that England was a degenerate nation incapable of defending the vast wealth which she could neither distribute nor use.

Germany, galled with the sense of having come too late into the world for her fair share of it, having rejected our proffered alliance with contempt, began openly to prepare for the day, which she never doubted was coming, when John Bull's inflated empire should be shattered beyond the possibility of recovery. There were few Germans who had the least doubt of the righteousness of such an enterprise.

But Germany, herself inflated with the pride that sees only what it wants to see, had judged superficially. England was not wholly out of touch with reality, for during the last twenty years, despite appearances to the contrary, she had been making a not altogether unsuccessful effort to regain it. The conviction of sin, to adopt a useful phrase from theology, which had been gaining on her towards the end of the nineteenth century, had become acute after the Boer fight for independence had pricked the bubble of imperialist Jingoism.

The cry of "wake up, England!" which was heard during the first years of the new century, represented a genuine, if vague aspiration to set our house in order while there was yet time. A general impression was rife that all was not well with England, and that some national effort was called for to avert imminent overthrow from abroad and upheaval within. Journalists

were turned on to work up vivid pictures of both events.

The agitation for protection, whatever its motives or advantages as a policy, had at least the good effect of causing searchings of heart as to the foundations of our commercial supremacy. So, also, Lord Roberts' campaign on behalf of conscription, rendered attractive by the fancy name of national service, drew attention to the possibility of our having shortly to fight a losing battle for our very existence.

In the world of art and literature, always the surest index to what is taking place in a nation's innermost consciousness, were witnessed a number of tentative and grotesque movements having for their object an escape from the shams and sentimentalities of the past into the only reality that art is capable of expressing.

The reaction palpably overshot its own mark, and produced a convention of heresy as tedious, in its own way, as that of orthodoxy.

A picture looking like a Christmas card is perhaps preferable to one like a pile of sugar-loaves seen in delirium tremens, and an insipid drawing-room lyric is not so bad as a muck-heap of words that neither rhyme, scan nor make sense. But from amidst a mass of pretentious ugliness there did emerge work of enduring value.

Mr. John Masefield may have vomited mild oaths with all the pleasure of a débutante trying to get a reputation for naughtiness, but this did not prevent him from writing verse of which Chaucer, to whom he is more akin than any other English poet, would not

have been ashamed. Mr. Epstein may have made beautiful women into nightmares, but some of his work possesses a virility which, if never pleasing, is at least genuine to an uncanny degree.

If Mr. Shaw, with Mr. Kipling, may be said to have dominated the 'nineties, the most significant intellectual figure of the period before the war is probably Mr. H. G. Wells. If the genius of Mr. Shaw is of a mainly negative order, that of Mr. Wells is almost feverishly constructive. He is like some restless demiurge whose instinct is always compelling him to create a new world before he has had time to survey the last one on the seventh day and pronounce it satisfactory. He has undoubtedly some of the worst faults of the age in which he has lived.

Even Mr. Chesterton has scarcely thrown off a greater quantity of half-baked generalisations or made such frank appeals to the gallery who take a smart phrase for a true one without pausing to think twice about the matter. He makes the same characters and situations do duty in successive novels, and prolix verbiage fill the gaps in his inspiration, with the frankness of a man who, finding himself bankrupt of ideas, goes on talking till they come. There is no modern author more chargeable with the faults of taste and temper that every conscientious man of letters ought to avoid.

And yet, throughout the whole of his prolific career, Mr. Wells' work has never lacked the authentic stamp of greatness, and this because at his worst and cheapest he has never wholly lost his desire to see the

facts as they are—his strong, redeeming passion for reality.

To a discerning eye, something of the evangelist might have been detected even in the earliest phase of Mr. Wells. He looked out upon the human acquisition of mechanical power not as a commonplace feature of everyday life, but as a phenomenon of such wonderful possibilities that it set his imagination wildly at work, ranging over the future, canvassing the possibilities of turning beasts into men and men into gods, of travelling in a few hours to the other end of time, and of a future civilisation of vulgarity and social inequality great enough to turn mankind into two races of dwarfed imbeciles and cannibalistic gnomes living on amid the ruins of a power whose secret they have forgotten.

It was this sense of the dominating importance of the human command over nature that enabled Mr. Wells to get a truer perspective of the time and its needs than any other reformer. Nothing whatever was sacred to him. To make game of the Almighty was a commonplace achievement compared with his frank avowal of republicanism, and his daring to turn the searchlight of his criticism on the speeches and acts of royalty.

But he did not stop at criticism. No sooner did an idea come into his head for the betterment of society than he dashed it down in book or article form and launched it at the world. He resembled no one so much as the Kaiser in his ability to settle all the prob-

lems of humanity to his own complete satisfaction, from a new Bible to a new Utopia.

He did not even shrink from turning aside to write a universal history of the widest scope, abashed by no difficulty, pouring scorn over whatever he could not understand, and yet, in spite of all its faults, a noble work, of a breadth and suggestiveness such as no living academic historian has attempted to rival. And, most important of all, Mr. Wells more than any other man of his time grasped the real significance of the Great War—that either steps have got to be taken to prevent its ever recurring, or that civilisation has been weighed in the balances and found wanting, numbered and finished.

The consideration of Mr. Wells has carried us past the period immediately preceding the war, a period on which his own career throws so revealing a light. For despite all its ostentatious triviality, it was one of a vague and bewildered groping after a reality that men had almost lost the power to perceive or the will to attain. And even to our Continental critics was afforded sudden and startling proof that the reign of triviality had not yet eaten out the soul of the nation.

Far away in the Antarctic blizzard a little party of men—one of whose comrades had, like the gallant gentleman he was, laid down his life for the rest—composed themselves to die with a calmness and dignity that moved the admiration of Europe. One wonders whether this incident, small as it must have seemed if measured in terms of human life, may not have

caused a momentary doubt among the calculating strategists of Berlin whether an attack on England would be quite so simple an affair as reports of her degeneracy had led them to suppose.

And deep down in the masses of the people were the stirrings of a revival whose ultimate tendency nobody could portend. If an incredible amount of shoddy was turned out of the machines, it is a fact by no means without its significance that a demand was growing up not only for cheap and sometimes tastefully produced editions of the national classics, but also for works giving the latest results of scholarship in every branch of science, history and philosophy.

A fact not less remarkable was the gradual discontinuance of the practice of reckless lying in the halfpenny press. The astute men who were sensitive to every breeze of popular opinion began to discover that the report of an imaginary victory or the heartless invention of a massacre of Europeans in a distant country might drive away more readers than it attracted. And along with this went an increasing demand for the intelligent ventilation of social problems from every point of view. Such signs, however qualified and insufficient, were at least those of hope.

CHAPTER VI

WAR AND REALITY

TO say that the war had the effect of bringing the combatant nations face to face with naked reality seems a commonplace, but war has its shams and conventions no less than peace, and there is one sense in which war itself might be styled the greatest illusion of all, a truth which had been proclaimed some years before, by a writer calling himself Norman Angell.

It will put this in the clearest light if we imagine one of Samuel Butler's tyrant machines* to pay a visit to the outer world in order to survey the fortunes of its brother machines, for which alone it has eyes. It finds them busily, if wastefully engaged, in transforming the raw material of nature into useful and kindly forms, and distributing these over the world.

There are certain tubes and compounds that seem to have little use except to make a noise, certain curiously constructed ships that cruise about with apparent aimlessness till they are broken up, but our visitor soon learns not to be surprised at waste.

Suddenly, for no apparent reason, everything is changed. The tubes and compounds burst out of their

* Supposing for a moment that the machines had triumphed instead of being suppressed.

quiescence into violent and destructive activity, knocking to pieces with an efficiency hitherto unknown in this mad world not only all the other machines that come in their way, but each other as well.

Then a strange thing happens. The whole business of making matter useful comes to a stop, the community of machines begins to behave as if it were possessed of devils, not only are the decent ones everywhere knocked to pieces but every particle of energy is put into the multiplication of tubes and compounds in numbers and malignancy, like the germs of some foul epidemic.

The use of the strange ships is now only too plain, it is to drive off the seas, or preferably, to the bottom, everything that floats. Our visiting machine perhaps comes to the not unreasonable conclusion that its brothers have grown so sick of serving the purposes of human incompetence that they have, like Samson, determined to destroy themselves and their masters in one tremendous cataclysm.

For this, and nothing else, is what war means. The powers of production have become powers of suicide; the human race is engaged, with desperate energy, in pulling down on its own head the edifice of civilisation that it has laboured to build. Nobody except a few individual parasites has anything to gain, the victor is only a little less worse off than the vanquished, and the causes of quarrel are often so insignificant as to be almost forgotten in the course of the struggle.

Who, during the Franco-German war, realised that

this was ostensibly another war of the Spanish Succession, or who, among the recent combatants, cared more about the manner of Archduke Franz Ferdinand's death than that of Queen Anne?

Nor, among the deeper issues that come to light in the course of wars, is there any incapable of settlement, to the advantage of everybody concerned, by businesslike co-operation. It is no advantage to Russians to dragoon Finns, or Englishmen to dragoon Irishmen, or one Irishman to dragoon another. But at this point one is brought up against the obscene fiction of national honour.

To give up a single inch of territory, to allow justice or magnanimity to enter into one's motives, even to submit an important matter to arbitration or acknowledge a wrong, to fail to combine the worst instincts of Shylock and Cain with the stupidity of a school bully is to suffer in one's honour. And until some one has the courage roundly to damn the national honour or to laugh at it with all the heartiness of a Falstaff, it seems that mankind will be in a parlous condition.

This, then, may be regarded as the first and great reality of modern war, that it is nothing more nor less than the collective suicide of humanity. This is not to say that it would be safe or expedient to disarm by oneself in face of neighbours with the instincts and motives of robbers, but it does mean that war is a foul and measureless evil, that it is as stupid as it is wicked and as fatal as it is stupid, that it ought to be shorn of all its romance and known for the detestable

thing it is, that even a victory is, as Lao Tse proclaimed more than two thousand years ago, a thing to be bewailed with groans and lamentations.

Those who maintain that war, for some mystical or pseudo-scientific reason, is too deeply rooted in human nature to be abolished, are thereby pronouncing the speedy death sentence of civilisation. We must either get rid of war or it will get rid of us.

When, therefore, we say that the outbreak of war brings men violently into contact with reality, the statement is only partially true so long as men can be induced to go on imagining that war is something glorious and profitable. And this is the first feeling to be worked up in every country concerned.

The magnificent German army is going to be given a chance to show what it can do for the Fatherland; Holy Russia is marching westward in God's cause under her Little Father; the lost provinces, the unredeemed lands, are to be rescued from the oppressor —all is rejoicing, a hectic and ghastly exultation to the blare of military music as the wretched workers are dressed up and dispatched to the slaughter, cheering and singing as if to a feast. And the streets are filled with hysterical mobs, drunk with the excitement of their own undoing, and roaring out their own death-songs like captive Choctaws destined for the stake.

Any one who is even suspected of thwarting the will to suicide is hounded down as a traitor, to doubt of a swift and overwhelming victory or even to suggest that the enemy may have a case is to make oneself an object of suspicion if not of active hatred.

Once the war is launched, lying and humbug on a vast scale are among the first demands of national honour and safety. An atmosphere has to be created favourable to the will to win. Nothing, it is pretty generally agreed, is more pernicious to this than the truth. Men must be prevented, as far as organised effort can avail, from visualising reality in any shape or form.

All dispatches from the front must be carefully garbled to produce the impression that things are going as well as possible, and the only object in putting anything true at all is in order that the strangely elastic limits of patriotic credulity may not be strained to breaking point. A censorship is established to prevent any fact or opinion getting into circulation that may be deemed unsafe by those in authority. Above all, anything tending to suggest that any of our soldiers may be less brave than Lancelot or less pure than Galahad is a crime to be stamped out without mercy.

Hatred is acknowledged to be one of the most detestable of human passions, as ruinous to the intelligence as it is to the character, and yet during a war it is everybody's duty to whip up hatred to a pitch of homicidal mania. From ordinary human beings, perhaps not quite so good as ourselves but still no worse than other foreigners, the enemy are transformed into a race of devils such as has never been seen since the beginning of the world.

The records of past centuries are ransacked and falsified in order to establish the hitherto unsuspected truth that they have never been anything else

than devils. Not only are their minds sinks of iniquity, but their very forms and visages are depicted as being so ugly as hardly to be human.

War of this kind does not think of sparing either sex or age. The German frau and her children are drawn with a libellous malice that is heartily reciprocated by the pencils of our opponents. It seems less shocking than it might have done when vermin of this kind happen to be put out of the way in the course of legitimate warfare, which means warfare as waged by our own side.

It is noticeable that the very devilry of which we try to convict our opponents is often boastfully claimed for our own men. Terrible stories were published in the papers, often on the flimsiest evidence, of prisoners having been killed by the enemy. A German general was reported, whether truly or not, to have given such orders to his own troops.

And yet in how many clubs and mess-rooms was it not confided, no doubt with little truth but with full approval, that such and such a regiment had sworn to take no more prisoners, and even more horrible tales were passed round as good jokes, such as the one about the three German soldiers who were bayonetted in the act of praying to God, and of the party of moppers up who called, on Christmas Eve, down a dugout from which had arisen a cry of "Kamerad"—"Here's a Christmas present for you," and threw in a couple of Mills' bombs.

Long before there was any talk of conscription in England, every one of the combatants who was not

openly atheistic had pressed God into his ranks, ignoring the fact that the Christian Bible had reported God's Son as advocating in the most downright terms the doctrine of non-resistance to evil, and as having warned those who take the sword that they shall perish by the sword.

The German, having less sense of humour than any one else, succeeded in rising to greater heights of solemnity about his almighty comrade, and one of his most admired poets wrote a deliciously serious description of the Archangel Michael being granted leave from his ordinary duties to act as standard-bearer to Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria.

But the English were little behindhand in the fury with which they were wont to arraign any poor old Bishop who, in momentary recollection of the fact that he was after all supposed to be a Christian, ventured politely to doubt whether his Master would approve as much as was generally supposed of poison gas and the indiscriminate blowing to bits of civilians, even on the holy plea of two eyes for an eye, and grinders, molars, incisors and all for a tooth.

The worst of all this lying and pretence was that it was at least as apt to defeat its object as to achieve it. If, as many believe, there is a real and quite special case against the Germans, it will probably never be driven home.

Such sophisms will pass muster as that of Mr. Bernard Shaw, that when the whole population of any country, including all its criminal elements, is drafted into the ranks, and has its most brutal instincts

no longer restrained but encouraged, outrages of every kind will be certain to happen.

And when some Entente advocate replies that such an argument begs the question, and that outrages like the sacking of Louvain and the deportation of the girls of Lille were part of a policy of crime, thought out in cold blood and deliberately pursued, the impartial neutral will most likely shrug his shoulders and remark that this is what any patriot always thinks about his opponents. For it is the proverbial fate of liars that nobody believes them even when they are speaking the truth.

Nor is this the only penalty that life exacts from liars. Some of the dust they throw always gets into their own eyes, and they deceive no one so much as themselves. The constant exaggeration of every success and the turning of defeats into victories was a childishly stupid policy, because any one with more sense of fact than those who regulated the national falsification would have known that nothing relaxes the English temperament so much as the sense of everything going well, nor stiffens it to greater determination than when we are known to be in a tight place.

The overthrow of the fifth army in 1918 was almost worth while, if only for its effect in pulling the nation together and enabling the Government to take the most drastic measures to secure victory with hardly a breath of serious protest. And the constant working up of the will to victory could not fail to have its effect in destroying the national sense of proportion,

until victory began to be regarded as an end all-sufficient in itself, and the fatal belief got about that if only we could get the Bosche down, and then kick him into a jelly, the golden age of peace and prosperity would follow of its own accord. Our hardest and most necessary task after the war is that of unlearning most that we taught ourselves during it.

But at least the drafting of the greater part of our able-bodied manhood into the army, and the ordeal of fire and horror through which they passed would be enough to give them the capacity for facing reality! This is true, in a sense, and perhaps the greatest of all hopes for the future is in the effect of that tremendous experience in the overturning of all conventional values and starting the future with a clean slate.

But the advantages even of this sternest of schools are not without qualification. For it is in the very nature of an army to create a false and artificial standard of values, and to sap both the foundations of character and the power of independent judgment.

Pretence is the soul of an army in peace time. It only starts to perform the function for which it was intended when war is actually declared; during the whole of the rest of the time it is preparing for something that may never happen or disguising itself in fancy dress for purposes of public entertainment. It is only to be expected that of all public institutions the army should be the one least affected by reality.

Every one must have observed the contrast between the soldier and the sailor, between the alertness, professional keenness and sharpened wits of the typical

naval captain or lieutenant, and the mental lethargy that grows with every step in regimental seniority in all but a few favoured instances.

The reason is not far to seek. The sailor may not have the enemy, but he has always the sea; the slightest mistake in the handling even of the largest battleship may result in sudden disaster. The navigation of a ship is life in miniature, it is an unceasing adaptation to an ever-changing reality without. And for weeks and months together the sailor is confined to his ship, his opportunities for poodle-faking, to use the vivid term by which the military officer describes so important a part of his peace-time activities, are few and brief. Hence the marked difference in spirit between the two services.

Failure in the army is viewed with a tolerant and compassionate eye, it is generally hushed up and even when sheer incompetence has widowed so many women and orphaned so many children that a leader has had to retire from the fighting line, a safe and comfortable job can nearly always be found for him at home, or, still better, in India, if only the right people are interested in him.

But woe betide the unfortunate sailor, whom an accident to his ship brings within range of a naval court martial! The fault may be venial and he one of the most promising men in the service, but he is broken for all that.

It was thus that the navy accomplished with unfailing efficiency a task whose difficulty a proud and traditional silence has prevented the public from ever

realising. How near we were to a disaster, complete and final, when Jellicoe was holding the North Sea with inadequate forces and a base open to submarines, or how narrowly we escaped what, according to German Admiralty calculations, was the certainty of surrender by starvation, was no theme for sensational journalism, though Nelson himself never faced such a crisis nor won such a victory.

But the army tradition was one neither of efficiency nor silence. The junior service suffered from the necessity of having to face two ways at once, it was only half military, and the other half social. The crack regiments were indeed those in which the social side of the profession most predominated, and such a convention of futility was imposed that admittedly able officers have been known to resign or get seconded owing to the unpopularity they have incurred by their unwillingness to associate with the chaste and refined beauties of chorus and ballet.

Nevertheless the public school and regimental spirit did manage to turn out officers of unsurpassed courage and with a knack of popular leadership that was probably unique among the armies of the world. They were, in fact, finely adapted for the kind of war that had won the campaigns of Wellington and the battles of Raglan. So long as the conditions of this warfare were in any way reproduced, they performed marvels.

At the first battle of Ypres they had a task only differing in length of line and days from that of Waterloo, and by holding the German rush they perhaps saved the world for civilisation. But for the

new war of rival machinists the old system was neither intended nor in any way fitted. All the etiquette and ceremonial, the correct dress and close-order drill were not only useless but harmful, as tending to perpetuate a habit of mind the very reverse of efficient.

For what was it that the old military ideal had aimed at in the training of the common soldier? It was nothing more nor less than to provide homogeneous units of flesh and blood capable of responding to orders with the precision of well-oiled machines.

This was accomplished by a simple process of forming habits by suggestion. Positively, the soldier was to be stimulated by an impressive ceremonial, by a constantly inculcated loyalty to the person of the sovereign and the colours of his regiment, and by a tacit recognition of his officer as of a man of another caste and clay, to whom one might not even presume to speak without the intervention of an N.C.O.

But the great stimulus was that of fear. Much to the despair of the old type of officer, the torture of flogging had been abolished, but from the very moment he entered the barracks the recruit was taught that the minutest deviation from the word of a superior was an unthinkable crime, of which the consequences were swift and overwhelming.

In close order drill, the bedrock of his training, his minutest action was under control and his attention was perpetually on the strain for fear that some clumsily executed movement should bring him before a tribunal in which conviction was a matter-of-course and self-defence not only futile but often dangerous.

If your sergeant said you were guilty, it was bad policy to be innocent.

Thus was formed the old regular soldier, recruited from the poorest class and often driven to take the shilling by starvation. There was only one thing to do with him, which was so powerfully to appeal to his sense of fear that when it came to a fight, he would obey orders as the line of least resistance, and be more afraid of his superiors than of the enemy. And so well did it work, that with an army recruited largely from the gaols, and which he himself described as the scum of the earth, the Duke of Wellington found himself able to conquer Napoleon's best Marshals and finest veterans, and at last Napoleon himself.

But it is obvious that success can only be hoped for when the orders are very simple and easily communicated. You cannot develop and kill initiative at one and the same time. And it is obvious that you can only make a drilled automaton out of a man by rooting out initiative and independence of character. The soldier, who has all his movements controlled, who is fed and dressed and told where to go as if he were a baby, must lose by atrophy the power of controlling himself.

The new type of war put the old type of soldier completely out of date. Cavalry, in all but the most remote fields and against the most backward enemies, were not only a useless but even a mischievous arm, as the generals, too many of whom were cavalrymen, could not get it out of their heads that a "show" of

some kind must be arranged for them.* With the invention and development of the land-battleship the infantryman is bound to go the way of his fellow-fighter at hand-to-hand, the boarder in the navy.

There is no use for anybody under modern conditions except the man operating and protected by the machine. And to turn the old type of officer or soldier to this work is about as intelligent a procedure as asking some swiper of the village green to play in a Test Match. The efficiency of our air force is probably due to the fact that it is the branch of the service with the fewest traditions and that its officers are notoriously the least soldierlike in the old sense.

The volunteer, then, who had at the beginning of the war been bombarded with such appeals as "be a sport" or visions of girls shouting their love to him on his victorious return, found himself serving his apprenticeship in what was anything but a school of reality. Perhaps inevitably, under the circumstances, nobody thought of anything else than of imitating the regular system as closely as possible.

For the most part, the new soldier conscientiously did his best to adapt himself cheerfully to the strange atmosphere. If he happened to be bullied by some foul-mouthed ruffian of a drill-sergeant, he accepted it as part of the game, he perfected himself in all sorts of useless accomplishments with the faith of a child who believes that when he is grown up he will appre-

* As at the first Battle of Cambrai. In this connection the remarks of Marshal Haig as to the continued usefulness of cavalry in European War are worth studying. The Bourbon family can hardly claim a monopoly of their most remembered characteristic.

ciate the advantage of knowing the names of the Andes, he even tried to bend his mind to a proper sense of his inferiority to any one of the squire class with a star on his sleeve. And when some beef-witted general, insufficiently supplied with ammunition, launched him at uncut wire swept by machine guns, or left him unsupported by reserves—that was part of the game too.

But four-and-a-half years of war may light a candle for the soldier that all the darkness of an obsolete system may not avail to put out. Some things are gradually forced upon his consciousness. He sees the horror and the beastliness of it all, he knows that war is not the splendid and exhilarating thing it has been painted. He has found out all its daily sordidness, the sheer boredom that more than the fear of death itself makes men long for a wound severe enough to get them sent home.

And on some men, at least, was dawning a sense of the pretentious humbug, the solemn farce of all this military make-believe. They even began to suspect that the dreaded commander whom they occasionally encountered strutting and blasting masked a mind no more intelligent than his outward form. And then they began, some of them, to wonder whether, if the army itself were three parts humbug, the same might not be the plight of a civilisation in which such horror and stupidity were the rule.

They too, like the man in rags, began to realise what a burden pressed upon the back of humanity,

and to ask what they and all of us might do to be saved.

And the war at last forced us, in spite of ourselves, to revise, at least for the time of stress and to an imperfect extent, the stupid and feckless methods that had become habitual with us in matters of national concern.

It seems almost incredible that when war broke out nothing of the kind seems to have occurred to any one. A party ministry thrown up by the vicissitudes of a notoriously corrupt political system, was left to muddle along at a time when a single mistake might spell ruin past repair. Everybody was allowed to do that which was right in his own eyes, no matter whether he was a drone or a parasite.

Cowards, by the thousand, continued to enjoy themselves at their usual pursuits and others, more far-sighted, rushed into Government workshops and dockyards or whatever might render them immune from possible conscription. It soon came to be discovered that the less a man risked his skin, the more he got paid, and a bonus of several shillings a day for having preferred discretion to valour was not considered either unnatural or intolerable.

A legion of sharks and swindlers were invited to batten on the country's need, and even honest manufacturers could hardly help becoming profiteers. And when workmen were asked to abandon the hardly won rules of their unions they marked with bitterness that not the smallest sacrifice was exacted from the capi-

talist, who retained all his inflated profits whilst others were sacrificing everything they held dear.

But towards the end of the war sheer necessity compelled advance in national self-management. A few of the ministerial heads of administrative departments were actually selected for their competence and not merely for political reasons.

The great bulk of the nation's machinery, instead of being employed in wasteful and mutually destructive competition, was now intelligently directed to a national purpose, even though this was dictated by the miserable necessity of destruction. Our food, when the enemy was nearest starving us to death, was so well shared out that many of the poorer people were actually better provided for than in times of fullest prosperity. Our shipping, now controlled upon national lines, defied all the efforts of the submarines.

This was much, and enough to suggest what might be done if the nation were as determined upon victory in peace as in war. But it was little enough in all conscience when we consider that to the very end jobbery and influence were rife in every branch of national service, that our unhappy soldiers were delivered over to the murderous insufficiency of cavalry and Etonian commanders, that a shameful distinction was taken for granted between a man who might be forced to die and one who might only be bribed to work for his country, that the profits of the man in the office were more sacred than the life of his brother

in the trenches and that the corruption of our politics went on unrepentant and unchallenged.

With the peace came the reaction that every one had anticipated. That the snapping of the strain should bring an attempt to wipe out everything connected with the war and to revive the atmosphere of five years before, was natural and human. But reaction itself was an inevitable and temporary rebound, and only time will prove how much the war has taught us of the things appertaining to our peace.

Those of us who have looked reality in the face and lived have to see to it that we never lose that vision, that started from our slumbers by so terrible a warning we do not, now the long line is silent from Belfort to the sea, compose ourselves again to sleep. The voice of our next awakening may be that which calls mankind to the judgment and death-sentence of a civilisation it has gained only to abuse.

CHAPTER VII

THINKING IN A PASSION

TO talk of reformation without indicating the way would be idle mockery. And every reformation has its first seat in the mind. All day long a stream of perceptions is pouring into our minds from the world outside, and every one of these starts on a progress whose end is action of some kind. Nothing in thought stands still, nothing is lost. But between perception and action almost any change may occur. The brain is at work combining, transforming, delaying.

The new arrival from without may have to wait long before it comes to deed, it may be stored in the subconsciousness where it remains unmarked but not for one moment inactive, like an unborn child putting on flesh and bone against its going forth into the world. Thus between the perception of reality and life's consequent adaptation intervenes the process of thought by which the nature of that adaptation is determined. In other words, reality demands a brain to receive it, and by thought, and thought alone, are we justified or condemned.

If, then, we are to achieve the supreme task of putting ourselves right with reality, we must address ourselves to the reformation of our own minds.

Hitherto the trouble has been that mankind have succeeded in creating a wholly new reality for themselves without ever seeing that a development in the world of matter demands a corresponding development in the world of mind.

Men have been increasing their own powers and the complication of life with the result, so far, that they have imposed the work of the twentieth century upon an eighteenth century brain. Or, to take an older illustration, the new wine has been put into the old bottles, and both are in a way to perish.

In a perfect mind, so far as we can conceive of it, every scrap of information that came from without would be swiftly yet calmly registered, and in accordance with the information all action would be regulated.

A man who wishes to buy a new house or go on an expensive holiday does well to ascertain from his passbook exactly what his resources amount to. It is comforting to think that you have a thousand a year when you have only five hundred, but it is a bad assumption on which to conduct your business. And yet there is hardly one of us who does not order his mental life after a fashion no less absurd.

The first thing we do with any information that our senses give us is to distort it to suit our own wishes, and then to act as if the distorted version were the true one.

When we talk of putting an eighteenth century brain to do the work of the twentieth, we have only to think of Dr. Johnson, whom both his own contem-

poraries and posterity have agreed in honouring as the representative man of his time, the "grand Cham" of English letters. And yet Johnson himself, for all his uprightness and lucidity, possessed a mind wholly incapable of realising the difference between what was, and what he wanted to be.

When he reported the debates in Parliament he confessed, not without a certain humorous satisfaction, that he did not allow the Whig dogs to have the best of it. It would never have occurred to him to say, "Sir, so addicted is the heart of man to the practice of falsehood, that I will neither endure to perceive, nor suffer others to become acquainted with, any particle of truth or reason tending to the detriment of those opinions, that my prejudices and passions have imposed upon me." And yet this would have been no less than true.

Johnson's idea in talking was seldom to arrive at the truth, but most often to get the better of his companion, and when he failed to do this, instead of thanking the other man for putting him right, he would lose his temper with him, and try to carry his point by violence. If he missed his man, it was said, he would knock him down with the butt. Conversation was, in fact, a duel.

This habit of thinking in a passion is one of the most deeply rooted in the human mind; in fact, it may be said that in this respect man has not even yet got beyond the animal stage. Even if we accept all the wonderful stories of brute sagacity, it is safe to say that no member of the brute creation, except in one

or two extraordinary and doubtful instances, ever came to the point of thinking anything out.

The animal is guided by his passions. The bull sees some one in a red shawl going across his field and feels impelled to attack it, the spaniel at tea-time feels himself hungry or greedy and comes and demonstrates at the drawing-room window. The furthest the beast ever gets is when an habitual fear impels a wily old rat to deny himself a piece of cheese in a trap, or makes the inhabitants of the jungle keep away from the tastiest-looking man beneath a mosquito net.

This is no doubt a necessity of development. The desires of a beast are few and his problems relatively simple, and therefore the passions that rouse him into activity are tolerably efficient guides. The beast, to put it bluntly, feels what he wants and goes for it by the most direct route.

For a man this simple procedure is not enough. Before deciding to act he has to arrive at an impartial estimate of the situation, to understand it in all its bearings, and to appreciate as nearly as possible the effect of any proposed line of conduct. And in all this the first thing necessary is to eliminate the personal element, to think, as we say, dispassionately.

This is just what mankind in the past has never been able to do. The truth is what I want it to be, and anybody who thinks differently is an object of passionate hatred. James I., a really intelligent man of a not unkindly disposition, once condescended to argue with two men who held different views from those which happened to be fashionable on the

Trinity. But the first word of respectful opposition was too much for his royal temper. He began to dispute with his foot instead of his tongue, and the two poor men were burnt alive.

It would have been almost as much as his throne was worth to have said, "Here are we three groping in the dark for the truth, in Heaven's name let us sit down and see what help any one of us can give to the others! It is too probable that none of us is quite correctly informed about the management of this universe around us." Some such answer would seem the obvious dictate of common sense.

Recent research has thrown a wholly new light both on the passions themselves and the extent to which they influence our thought. The study of dreams has shown that when once the power of judgment is relaxed, the mind gives unrestrained scope to its natural tendency to construct a world in the image of its own passions.

To say, with the Austrian doctor, Freud, that a dream is a repressed wish is to simplify the facts unduly, unless we count fear as a negative wish, for if we trace the source of our dreams we shall often find it as much in our fears as our desires. In contrast with the world without, which comes to us through our senses, the dream world is built up by our passions out of a confusion of memories.

If we could keep our dreams for bed-time, all would be well. But, unfortunately, we are perpetually trying to transform our image of the waking world into the likeness of our dreams. We see not the thing

that is, but the thing that we want to find, or fear to find. The saint who has prayed for the sight of his Master will see the figure on the Rood incline its head, or the longed-for vision take shape before him.

It is not at all improbable that the Roman soldiers, when hard pressed by Lake Regillus, actually thought they saw the Twin Brethren fighting at their head, as some of our own men appear to have seen angels or archers during the retreat from Mons. And the most extraordinary instance of all is that of the Russian legions, who were literally created by the tension prevailing at the most anxious moments of the war, and whose imaginary forms were seen passing through England by sane and level-headed people all over the country.

As with our desires, so also with our fears. The history of panics throws many a curious sidelight on the fear dream in real life. Once in a South American theatre some practical joker started an alarm of fire, and there were those who actually felt the molten lead from the roof dropping on them.

At the blockade of Santiago de Cuba by the American fleet, a false alarm of Spanish torpedo-boats started the Americans blazing away for the next half-hour at the crest of waves under the firm impression that they were being attacked. A similar mistake caused the ill-fated Russian Baltic fleet to fire into our fishing boats off the Dogger Bank and even on some of their own craft.

One of the darkest chapters of human history is that of the persecution of suspected witches, of whom

a superstitious populace was desperately afraid, and yet readers of old books like Glanvill's *Sadducismus Triumphatus* will find masses of sober evidence, attested by grave and educated persons, testifying to the sinister powers and doings of these poor, helpless old women. Such a power has the human mind of distorting the truth, once its desires or fears are engaged!

The reformation of thought imperatively demanded by the new order of things is that we should be able to see and judge of reality without the distorting intervention of our own passions. It is for us to think like men, and not like brutes or idiots. For a complete idiot is one for whom the outside world does not exist at all, who laughs and cries as the fancy seizes him, and is incapable of making such a simple response to fact as that of getting his food into his mouth.

And even now the human race, in the mass, is accustomed to behave in much the same idiotic way, failing to adapt itself even to such an obvious necessity as that of ending war, and perhaps calling to God as if to a keeper who will preserve it from the consequence of its own misdoing. For nothing less than the idiocy of the whole race is the result of all its individuals thinking more or less in a passion.

We have already seen how this habit of mind is both the cause and effect of the modern cult of intensive journalism. People take up their morning paper for the purpose not of enlightening, but of distorting their minds. If it ceased to perform the task of

sedulously pandering to their prejudices, they would cease to take it in.

It is as common a practice now as it was in Dr. Johnson's time not to let the other "dogs" have the best of it. If a moving or plausible appeal is made by one side, the chances are that it will either not be reported at all by the other, or in such careful selection as to deprive it of its sting. We have even known instances where members of professedly educated families have been accused of nothing less than treason and radicalism for wishing to see the pronouncements of their opponents ungarbled.

It is the well-known practice at political meetings to prevent an unpopular opponent from being heard at all, and only recently we have had the spectacle of Cabinet Ministers being howled down at the headquarters of a party whose name, if nothing else, spells freedom, because their own brand of liberalism was a shade different from that of the more numerous section of delegates!

And this habit of hostility to the truth, instead of being the enemy against which all men of goodwill should unite in striving, is deliberately inculcated, often as a first principle of education. Most of us have heard of that egregious headmaster who is reported to have said that he would despise any boy who did not believe that his own school was the best in the world, oblivious of the fact that this is to condemn the vast majority of boys to believe in a lie, and also to set up the most effective of all possible barriers to any reform of the public school system.

Only recently a boy of a certain school recorded his impressions of it in a book of some brilliancy and entire sincerity, lifting the veil from a small part of the filth and sordidness that loyal "old boys" have the good taste to forget. For telling what every one who has been through the mill must have known to be a very Bowdlerized version of the truth, this "old boy" received the degradation or compliment, whichever way he chose to take it, of being struck off the school roll.

Of the business of working up national or racial feeling we have never seen a more thorough-going example than in modern Germany.

The German had drilled himself into the belief that he was superior to other men. The gravest and most erudite historians had been turned on to write up this version of the facts—even Christ received the honour of Teutonisation—and not only did the German cultivate all this nonsense for the genial purpose of imposing upon the rest of the world, but he finally got to forming his own plans upon the assumption that it was true.

He embarked upon a war into which he imagined that England, and subsequently America, would not dare to come, and in which he had only got to put in motion one of the prepared schemes of his general staff in order to sweep victoriously over the French armies and capital, and then to polish off the Russians at his leisure.

So blinded was he by his habits of thought that he was capable of committing a blunder that any intelli-

gent cadet might have avoided, that of withdrawing two army corps from the decisive wing at the decisive moment, in order to safeguard every inch of his territory.

Even in such an apparently prosaic matter as finance this habit of distorting the facts to suit one's desires is rife, and that among the most experienced men of business. The history of commercial panics is that of calculation distorted by desire.

A wave of optimism sweeps over the business world at fairly regular intervals, an extravagant confidence is lavished on all sorts of undertakings, good and bad; the sun is shining, and people invest upon the assumption that it will always continue to shine. Then comes the collapse of some big concern, like Baring's, or Overend and Gurney's, and a chill wave of fear sweeps over the business world; everybody wants to realise at once, and failures become general.

A very minor instance of the way in which sentiment colours business operations is that afforded by a recent issue of 6 per cent. housing bonds by the corporations of Reading, Derby, Gateshead, Wallasey, and Newport. The first three of these issues were heavily over-subscribed and the fourth subscribed in full, but little more than half of the Newport issue was taken off the hands of the underwriters, though subsequently the stock rose merrily, neck to neck with the over-subscribed Gateshead and the fully subscribed Wallasey.

The sole ostensible reason for this early shyness of investors was the sentiment aroused against the Welsh

miners by the coal strike, which was at its height at the time of the issue.

But in what Darwin called the peaceful realms of science we might at least expect thought to be impartial and undistorted by passion. Alas, anybody who has had much experience of an academic atmosphere knows how far this is from being the case! There is no such hotbed of prejudice and heresy-hunting as a dons' common-room. Academic orthodoxies are little heard of, because few people are capable of understanding the dogmas at issue. For that very reason they are more deeply rooted and impervious to fact than almost any other.

The man who aspires to make a living out of the practice of teaching, as most men of science are compelled to do, however little they may be fitted for it, soon finds that he must perforce bow the knee in the house of whatever may be the fetish of the hour. Otherwise he will not actively be persecuted, but simply passed by. No one will think of electing a notoriously "unsound" man to any post or chair, and, failing private means, he had better find another profession as an alternative to starving.

Truth never has to fight a harder battle than one against entrenched authority. When Darwin first propounded his theory of the origin of species, the most distinguished biologists of his time closed their minds obstinately against him, but when he, in his turn, became a fetish of orthodoxy, even such a brilliant critic as Samuel Butler was unable to obtain a hearing.

So in history. It would be almost impossible nowadays for any one to go outside the limits of the colourless and soulless "research" which is commemorated in such a monument of boredom as the *Cambridge Modern History*.

Most extraordinary of all, custom and vested interest have sanctioned the dreary fiction of a number of social "sciences" which are not sciences at all, but merely the disconnected opinions of various professors who agree with each other in no single point except as regards the seriousness with which their political or social or economic science, whatever it is, ought to be taken.

"Truth," as old Chaucer said, "is put down." Neither in Church, nor college, nor forum, nor market-place do men fix their naked regard upon the thing that is. As in the court in *Alice through the Looking-Glass,* the verdict precedes the trial; they know what they want to find and they find it. "Seek and ye shall find" comes to have quite an unexpected meaning. It is not often that a thing is sedulously looked for without its turning up in some form satisfactory to the seekers.

When what passed for Christianity became the official faith of the Cæsars, pious searchers were not long in discovering the three crosses on Calvary, despite the extreme improbability of their having been either buried together or preserved. So when Sir Oliver Lodge had convinced himself before the war that the barrier between life and death was on the point of being broken down, it is not to be wondered

at that he obtained veridical evidence of his son's survival from the first medium to whom he applied.

This does not prove that good Empress Helena and Sir Oliver were wrong in their respective discoveries, but it does compel us to examine these with the most suspicious scrutiny, on the ground that whatever the facts were, such convinced seekers were almost bound in the circumstances to arrive at the results they did.

It must not be imagined that when we talk of thinking in a passion—by which we mean not necessarily excited thinking, but thought distorted by the will—we necessarily imply that the process of thought is illogical. The worst fallacies are not those of logic, and there is, in fact, no such keen logician as a common type of madman. The history of most obsessions is that of merciless logic unrestrained by any sense of proportion.

A man may be obsessed by the fear that he has got cancer, and all efforts to prove that he has not got it break down from the sheer impossibility, as he is well aware, of doing so. He may have cancer. The doctor may be wrong who tells him that he is quite sound; the best doctors often are. Any little pain or swelling may be a symptom; he cannot be certain, but he cannot be certain it is not. It is the possibility that tickles his brain with fear.

And just in the same way, if we turn our thought to work without any sense of proportion, we can make a logical case to defend practically anything we like. And that is what we usually do.

To disprove anything whatever is no easy feat. Father William developed his jaw by arguing with his wife, and it is improbable that they ever arrived at a conclusion satisfactory to both. If we want a logical reason for believing anything, from Ultramontanism to Bol$hevism, we shall have no difficulty in finding it. We have only to select our premises and let the results follow.

We have heard kindly hearted women, who would not hurt a fly, seriously defending both the divinely inspired authenticity and the morality of the hideous and perhaps mistranslated legend of the bald prophet, the forty-two chaffing children, and the two Gargantuan she-bears.

It was doubtless necessary for the prophet to assert his divine authority; the children may have said other and ruder things, and the Supreme Being, who is usually dragged in as an accomplice, doubtless had good reasons which we are not allowed to know. And thus one of the most absurd and revolting of stories can be defended by arguments that we may despise but cannot conclusively refute.

The typical argumentative woman—and this is probably more a question of education than sex—is, as she often asserts, quite logical, but she uses the weapon of logic in a thoroughly unscrupulous way. Only a very unwise and inexperienced man will try to reason with her. The fault is not with the reasoning, but with the premises on which it is based. These premises are—and this applies to unscrupulous

thinkers of both sexes—incomplete fragments of reality distorted by passion, or false altogether.

The real reason for defending the bear story is not a noble enthusiasm for the truth, but a fear lest any part of the Bible should prove open to doubt, with disastrous consequences to faith and peace of mind. Religion, thus conceived of, is like a card-house, of which every card must be kept in its place. And thus every result of critical research will be ignored or flatly denied and the moral sense deliberately blunted in order to reach a desired and edifying conclusion.

The reasoning by which we are accustomed to confirm whatever convictions we happen to hold already is based upon a similar process of allowing our desires to select the facts. An old-fashioned Unionist and a patriotic Irishman can reason themselves each into a fury of non-compromise by selecting from the woful story of Ireland, past and present, only those facts that suit him.

The papers on one side will have nothing but Cromwell, the penal laws, the '98, and the black and tans, a tale of ancient wrongs daily renewed, and the other will retort with cold-blooded murders of innocent old people, an unprovoked rebellion in the hour of crisis, and, if they have more knowledge of history than is usually possessed by such disputants, the difficulty of coming to any sort of understanding with such an untractable and impossible person as the Irish Celt has generally proved himself to be.

It is the same in the working up of class hatred. One side sees one set of facts and the opposite side

another, and these are the only facts allowed to be dwelt upon in their respective organs. The zealous communist feeds his mind upon stories of sweated labour, of slums, and of profiteering. The other side has nothing but the bitter cry of the middle class, strikes in time of war, the meanness of the trades' unions towards ex-service men, and so forth. Each side has an excellent case against the other, and that is all that it is allowed to hear. And so a suicidal hatred is formed to make Britain a house divided against itself.

We have already seen how easily nations are able to find grounds for hating each other, and a hearty ill-will is all that is needed to place John Bull, or Germania, or Uncle Sam on monuments of proved iniquity topping the clouds.

But we are paying too great a compliment to current reasoning by talking as if it were a mere matter of selecting premises which are true in themselves. Very often our ignorance or laziness is capable of accepting a complete falsehood and then building our case upon it. For passion not only picks and chooses among the facts, but actually falsifies and invents.

Only recently a deliberate attempt was made to fan class hatred by the publication of some sensational and melodramatic nonsense tracing most modern democracy to a dreadful Jewish conspiracy whose details might have strained the credulity of a board-school girl at a cinema, but was supposed to be quite commensurate with the intelligence of the worthy folk

who visualise Mr. Thomas and Mr. Smillie as dancing the carmagnole in red caps in the intervals of grinding their teeth and stropping the blades of guillotines.

The principal document on which this hair-raising theory was based was proved to be a clumsy forgery by the Russian secret police, but it is safe to say that not one in a thousand readers who were convinced by the revelations were in the least affected by the exposure.

"These Jews are very cunning, my dear, and of course they'll try to wriggle out of it. But I am quite sure it can all be explained. You mustn't believe everything you hear—it's only encouraging these dreadful Bolsheviks to let them think they have got the best of it. And that awful part about Hiram and Abiram and the coal strikers I am absolutely certain is true."

But whether the grounds on which we base our beliefs are actually false, or merely part of the truth, the fact remains that hardly ever, in ordinary life, does any one attempt, in the noble phrase of Matthew Arnold (who was far from living up to it) to see life steadily and see it whole.

Take up any newspaper or magazine, take down the latest book from your library shelves, and try the opinions they contain or the view of life they set forth by the truth or adequacy of the grounds on which these are based.

Take a novel of Indian life, in which the brown men are represented as ignorant and superstitious rascals, without faith or principles, and the whites as

strong and self-sacrificing heroes, patiently bearing the burden of Empire and dealing out its benefits to an ungrateful and murderous race—read this and ask yourself whether it is likely to represent quite the whole truth about Englishmen and Indians, or whether it may not be mere unscrupulous mendacity pandering for money to a known prejudice.

The next book is perhaps an exposure of spiritualism (a defence of it would serve equally well as an example) making great merriment over the humbug in which so many mediums have been detected, talking as if the whole thing were either deliberate fraud or crass stupidity, and judiciously slurring over any inconvenient evidence that is not quite so easy to explain away. You are soon reminded that the subject of life after death is one in which the passions are so deeply engaged that a man or woman who can think about it really impartially is a phenomenon harder to believe in than the most rackety ghost.

You can continue the process at your leisure, in almost any direction—examine a carefully edited biography, any political or social treatise, something designed for the relief of doubt or the discomfiture of obscurantists, an account of Germany or anything else as it really is, a history of Ireland at any period bound in green or red, or perhaps orange, a scientific treatise going one beyond Darwin or resurrecting Lamarck or booming or showing up Einstein, anything, almost, that gets into print or for the matter of that into conversation, and you will not be long

in discovering that the average human mind does not even attempt to see or think about reality, that its opinions are dictated by its passions, and the truth has to accommodate itself thereto.

CHAPTER VIII

MENTAL INERTIA

WHEN we speak of thought distorted by passion it is perhaps natural that we should not include what is the most insidious of all human desires, that of avoiding trouble. This is, in its origin, a reasonable economy. The more simply we can attain our ends, the more energy we have left over for other purposes.

One of the most important inventions in cotton spinning was made by a boy who was tending some machinery and discovered that if he tied it up in a particular way it would do the same work while he sat kicking his heels. The bicycle may save for better things the time that we spend in walking.

The desire to avoid trouble becomes a vice when it causes us not only to curtail our means but to sacrifice our ends. If the boy inventor had risked smashing the machine altogether or had caused it to turn out worse yarn, his master might not unplausibly have characterised him as a lazy young scamp, instead of paying him the compliment of appropriating his invention.

The process of thought to which every impression is subjected before it passes into action is as fatiguing, in its way, as any other sort of work. Anything that

can legitimately be done to shorten it is an unqualified benefit. A mind trained to habits of order will do accurately and easily work that would fatigue and baffle another.

It is only when the mind tries to save itself trouble by doing bad work that we can speak of it as slovenly. It is too easy to simplify thought by divorcing it from the truth, by slurring over its processes and allowing symbols to fill the place of realities. And when the counterfeit is as readily accepted as the genuine product there is an almost irresistible temptation to save oneself trouble by thinking dishonestly.

But the desire to avoid fatigue is not the only reason for slovenly thinking. We have already seen that the object of most thought at the present day is to arrive not at the truth, but at whatever conclusion we have fixed upon already as being in harmony with our own desires. It is obvious that a correct or thorough process of thought is the last thing that is desirable from this point of view. The more unscrupulous and arbitrary we can be about it the more competent we are to work the oracle.

The young man who wishes to be free from doubt will keep himself in pious ignorance of anything that might weaken his faith and the heated partisan will applaud every piece of journalistic clap-trap that tends to score off the other side.

It must not be forgotten that the vicious simplification of thought is not only a convenience but actually a paying proposition when appealing to an audience who themselves like to be saved the trouble of think-

ing. A scrupulous mind may be an actual disqualification in journalism or even literature of the more popular stamp. Some agents will advise a new author to avoid "psychology" in his novels, to go for a good and melodramatic plot and a strong love interest, and remember that Meredith and Hardy, if they had not established reputations, would be a drug on the market.

A certain young author, who had, as an undergraduate, doubled the sales of a well-known academic magazine by sheer brilliancy of editorship, and whose name is now known throughout the length and breadth of the country, started his career as a professional journalist on the staff of one of the illustrated halfpenny dailies. On arriving at the office, he was told to write a paragraph on some subject or other, and naturally did his best to earn the good opinion of his editor by a crisp and concise piece of English. The editor, also a university man, summoned the new contributor to his presence.

"My dear fellow," he said, "this will never do. This might be written for the *Times*. You must really remember that you are writing for a halfpenny audience. I'm not going to put you on to any other job this morning. Just take a copy of this paper, and read it from beginning to end. Then sit down and re-write your paragraph in exactly the same style. You won't be here long before you realise what damned fools you have got to write down to."

We have seldom seen one of these blotchily illustrated and vilely written organs flooding the book-

stalls and penetrating the homes of people supposed to be educated, without thinking of that incident, and realising that this journalese feast is, in truth, hog-wash contemptuously ladled out by men who have long ago found that they can make a living by suffering fools gladly.

The halfpenny audience has now become a penny audience, but it is no less keen to have its intelligence insulted and the worst possible trash thrust upon it. It desires to be saved the trouble of thinking and the inconvenience of seeing things as they are, and the supply meets the demand.

It is easy to see what mischief is being done by sedulous pandering to such mental laziness. The complication of modern life calls for a corresponding thoroughness and delicacy of thought, and it is the object of most people to save themselves, at all costs, the trouble of thinking. There is no more obvious way of doing this than simply to ignore the complexity of life, and to make it out to be a much simpler thing than it is. It is as if life were to say to reality:

"If you will make such extravagant demands upon me, that is not my fault. I shall continue to treat you as if you were reasonable, and you can do what you like. My reality is going to be the reality I want, and can deal with."

To simplify reality by falsifying it, that is what the uneducated and slovenly mind is perpetually striving to effect, that is the first principle of what, whether in books or magazines or newspapers, we designate as journalism. There is no better example of this

tendency than that afforded by the presentment of life whether in print or on the stage or cinema, that we know as melodrama.

The average manual labourer or servant-girl does not want his or her brain bothered by the shades and intricacies of character, they pay their sixpences to relax their minds and not to keep them on the stretch. Life, as they insist on having it shewn to them, has to be ordered according to a fixed and unalterable convention; the people who come on the stage must differ from those of real life in being so devoid of all subtlety that their motives can be understood, and the action must move in a way so honoured by precedent and capable of prediction that it can be followed without effort.

In this strange world, which those for whom it is created come to regard as the image of reality, everybody is either very good or very bad, except the exclusively comic characters, who are practically non-moral, and who, to judge by their lack of any serious interests whatever, are born amid shrieks of laughter and expire in the midst of some Rabelaisian story just before coming to the naughty word.

The hero of these romances is always a person of immaculate goodness and pays a delicate compliment to the ideals of his audience by being at once an object of unmeasured admiration and such an abject fool as to be incapable of drawing even the most obvious conclusions.

His opponent, on the other hand, is credited with the deepest intelligence which he employs for the sole

and almost disinterested purpose of doing evil, and particularly of injuring or obtaining possession of the hero's affinity, a young woman of pronounced sexual attractions, indecently innocent, and of a clinging imbecility surpassing, if possible, that of her destined lord, just such a woman, in fact, as the average male spectator or reader would like to obtain for himself.

A female villain is probably added—a brunette, for melodramatic virtue varies directly with the fairness of the hair. The whole performance must be arranged so as to stimulate the sexual instincts as far as possible under a mask of immaculate prudery, only lifted for a moment to reveal the obscene leer of the comic man.

That is how those who cater for the public provide them with amusement, which is at the same time more or less instructive to them as holding up a mirror to life. But it is necessary to approach them for business as well as pleasure, and to impress upon their imaginations as simply and crudely as possible whatever version of the facts is best calculated to advance somebody's interests.

Contemplate—as in fact you will be compelled to do whether you like it or no—those garish and painful hoardings that have been called the poor man's picture gallery. Perhaps you will see in flaming letters some such rhyme as

"The sons of the morning shout together
Mendax cloth keeps out the weather"

a simplification of the facts whose baldness you will be able to appreciate if you have one of the firm's Rainex Truda overcoats bunching round your shoulders and a soaking vest next to your skin.

The next poster may bear some such legend as "Tariff Reform means Starvation," a simplification of economic theory that might have made even Richard Cobden stare and gasp. Bestial children, who make you long for another Herod or Elisha, arise with goggle eyes, clamouring for a tin of blancmange powder. And—incredible as such a thing might appear in a Christian country—the next advertiser may be God Himself, perhaps with a warning whose relevance is appreciated by not one of those who regard this maniac and insolent chorus of assertion—"the wages of sin is death."

But turn to the columns of your newspaper or magazine, and you will see what at first sight seems a message of good tidings. Here is a firm that actually professes to make a complete reformation of anybody's mind—for a good round sum, it is true, but the labourer is worth of his hire. A reformation that ought to solve the problems of mankind once and for all!

This wonderful system! There is nothing that it will not do, nothing that it will not cure. It will take away lassitude, inaccuracy, hesitation, blushing, insolvency and sin and give you instead wit, genius, self-assurance, charm of manner, personal magnetism, virtue and above all money, money that will roll into your pockets and make your income go on doubling

and redoubling till a new and improved version of the system comes out, and then you can start it trebling.

With rare lucidity the unsuspecting reader is convinced that in these days of high prices an increased income is absolutely necessary. And look at these curves and figures—that is what has happened to other people's incomes and what will happen to yours, if you only pay up and take the oath of secrecy! *We* will do the rest.

True, we do not submit our system to open criticism. In fact we take every precaution against any detail of it getting out. We, dear pupil, confide in your honour. But in case you suspect the least deception you have only to read one of thousands of testimonials, some of them by quite well-known people, who out of pure disinterested love of humanity have begged us to advertise their opinions of the merits of our system.

All these great and good men and women, their portraits appealing to you with such guileless eyes—even Miss Phyrne Sangramore, everybody's darling, that singularly generous young lady, who has made no secret of owing her complexion to Peachey's cold cream, her smile to Brushless Dentifrice and her agility to Bunyan's corncure, has taken it up and found it too sweet for words, not to speak of the clergyman who has attained fresh inspiration for his arduous, spiritual duties, and a new living more than twice as wealthy as the last with the distinct hope of a rural deanery.

The facts, though voluminous, are simple, and

simple faith is worth . . . well, write for a free copy of "Wisdom and the Superman," a priceless book in itself, and you will see what your simple faith is worth to us.

This is a common type of advertisement nowadays, the idea of the secret mind system has been taken up by more than one enterprising firm, and akin to it are the nostrums of various educational tipsters who will teach you how to make a fortune by your pen or pencil or your fingers on the piano, the idea being always to sell you printed matter at anything exceeding ten times its market value.

We offer no criticism on the merits of these systems, because we should have to pay more than we are prepared to do for the privilege of inspecting them, and then be bound in honour not to criticise them. We only mention them to shew the extraordinary simplicity of a public which can be successfully appealed to by arguments so palpably unconvincing.

One might imagine that firms whose business it was to inculcate logical and rational methods of thought would refrain from basing their reputations on grounds that the slightest reflection would shew are neither more logical nor rational than those of other advertisements, and in one very important respect carry even less conviction to the reflecting mind, for the proprietors of pills and soap at least do not sell their products in sealed packets, and then bind the purchasers never to shew them even to their wives.

So much at the mercy of its surroundings is the mind that will not apply itself to the labour of thought.

Hamlet lost all patience with his friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, because they thought they could play on him as easily as if he were a pipe, and yet the majority of us are little better than pipes that any one can pick up in the street and play to what tune he likes.

We are incapable of helping ourselves, either individually or in the mass. We have said to reality, "depart from us!" because we are too lazy to receive it, but what has come to us in its place is likely to give us more trouble than the severest intellectual effort. We are like soldiers who think it too much of a bother to put on gas masks.

Even when we do set ourselves to think, it is on the understanding that the whole, uncongenial operation shall be shortened as much as possible, by the simple process of never thinking twice about the same thing. "First thoughts," such is one of the mottoes of journalism, "are the only ones that count." Some of the most distinguished thinkers of our day owe no small part of their fame to their facility in impressing readers with the apparent smartness of a conclusion or epigram, just as a conjuror carries off some palpable bluff by immediately distracting the attention of his audience. Men of real genius have, unhappily, condescended to build up their fame upon the lavish practice of such legerdemain. Perhaps they might retort, with some probability, that had they not done so they would have found no audience.

Mr. Bernard Shaw, who is capable of better things, is unfortunately one of the worst offenders in this re-

spect, and is now having to pay for it by what must be the galling experience of being lionised not as a critic and reformer, but as a mountebank. We have watched one of his plays, a work of poignant tragedy, being greeted with cackles of appreciative laughter by an audience of middle-class devotees who imagine that because their G. B. S. is such a funny fellow, he must therefore be perpetually grinning through a horse-collar.

On another occasion we remember hearing a roar of laughter evoked by one of Mr. Shaw's characters, evidently supposed to be a typical modern young man, declaring with pompous indignation that he was an Englishman and would not hear the Government of his country insulted.

"Such a telling piece of satire," the laugh said as plainly as words could, "such a dig in the ribs for the English Pharisee. Just the type of young man one meets everywhere nowadays!"

It probably occurred to none of these good people, even if it occurred to Mr. Shaw himself, that in their wildest adventures they had never come across a youth capable of saying anything of this kind except in joke, and that Mr. Shaw might with just as much point and probability have made young Undershaft declare that he would knock down anybody who cast doubt upon the metaphysics of Hegel.

The difficulty of criticising work of this sort lies in the necessity of going through it patiently, sentence by sentence, and shewing in what respects it is untrue to fact, in what respects partial and in what

illogical. We do not envy the man who should undertake this task for the complete works of, let us say, Mr. G. K. Chesterton. We are tempted to suppose, like St. John, that the whole world could not contain the books that should be written.

This gentleman's kindly and humorous personality, his genuine if uneven poetic power, the occasional flashes of insight in his prose, and his generous enthusiasm for the oppressed are apt to blind us to what we can only describe as the intellectual bluff that he has raised to the level of a fine art. His method of criticising a book or writing a biography is one that ingeniously evades the necessity of any more knowledge of the subject than that involved in a glance at an encyclopædia and one or two useful tags for quotation.

His lives of Dickens, Watts and Blake would serve, with comparatively few alterations, equally well for almost any novelist, painter or mystical poet whose biography is likely to be marketable. They are merely pegs on which to hang a set of opinions with which we soon become familiar, couched in a form of violent paradox which starts by arresting the attention but which constant repetition soon reduces to the level of an irritating trick.

And not content with literature, Mr. Chesterton has not even shrunk from embarking on a history of England, with an equipment palpably less than that of many an intelligent schoolboy, but with a flamboyant dogmatism and above all a success with the public such as the most erudite scholar cannot rival.

There is, indeed, little enough to choose, nowadays, between literature and advertisement, and the process of cheapening thought for the public is the same in principle whether in poster or causerie. And the almost universal admiration with which such counterfeit work is boomed through the press, the praise that would be extravagant if applied to Matthew Arnold or Sainte Beuve, has the effect of levelling all values, of blunting the power to distinguish between the false and the true, and of allowing both taste and concentration to perish by atrophy.

The desire, thus constantly pandered to, to avoid the trouble of thought grows by what it feeds upon till at last it becomes overmastering. At a time when the very salvation of mankind demands that thought should be raised to the level of excellence required by modern conditions, there is too much reason to believe that among professedly educated people the standard has actually been lowered.

It is lamentable to go into some old country house, and see the library, locked up in glass cases, that some former owner has accumulated, rich with handsomely bound editions of the principal English and French and classical authors, and compare this with the present owner's library, consisting perhaps of James Braid on advanced golf and Jack Hobbs on advanced cricket, with Ruff's guide to the Turf, a novel or two by Baroness Orczy or Miss Ethel Dell, and a few magazines. And you will find that in all his vocabulary of disparagement our host has no epithet more heartily contemptuous than "brainy."

Every demand upon concentration is, in fact, being as far as possible eliminated from modern life. The old, three-volume novel, whatever its defects, at least presupposed a reader capable of keeping his mind on the same story for more than two-hundred and fifty large-printed pages.

The Victorian Low-Church Sunday, despite its implied insult to God as the enemy of all happiness, was based upon the idea of devoting one whole day in every seven to a more or less continuous devotion to His service. The old leading article was a serious and deliberate appeal to a judge capable of following the case without any special effort to lighten his task by seasoning it with intellectual spice.

Everything nowadays has to be crisp, snappy, obvious; shading and delicacy are dying out for lack of appreciation; a meticulous accuracy is a bore; the rage for a violent discord of primary colours and jazz music is only another phase of a demand corresponding to that of the besotted drunkard for perpetual draughts of neat brandy, preferably with cayenne pepper to make it bite. Such a man, while he survives, is not the one we should select as a connoisseur of old sherry.

Mental laziness is only the negative form of thinking in a passion. But whether the desire is to wrench reality to our own purposes or to save ourselves the trouble of dealing with it at all, the underlying defect is the same, we allow our will to distort our vision, we are unable to face the world as it is, but prefer to live in a dream-world of our own illusions. But we

might just as safely endeavour to stroll across the road at Blackfriars with our eyes shut and pretend that it is a country field.

If we want to live in the world of our dreams, we must take reality itself and make it conform to our will. We must avoid the fatal and lazy substitute of ignoring reality, and making believe that what we want has come already because we want it. For reality is like the djinn in the fable, which will prove an all powerful slave if summoned by the appropriate spell, but which will strike dead him who succeeds in calling it up without having mastered the secret of control.

"If thine eye be single," it has been said, "thy whole body shall be full of light," and it is to cultivate this single eye for reality that our efforts should be directed.

It is the eye of the poet, the only man who sees the flower and the sunrise simply as they are, and not clouded by custom and desire; it is the eye of the Russian novelist, whose characters amaze you by the sheer innocence of their presentation, so that you are moved to say, "this extraordinary man is actually writing in a book about real people"; it is the eye of the scientist, who, instead of seeing an ordinary apple tumbling in the usual way, observes a small, solid object, suddenly released, approaching the earth with a constantly increasing speed, and wants to know why; it is the attitude of one who, on hearing, not so long ago, of a priest of God telling a poor, old, paralysed woman in the workhouse that she was there because

she was too independent, saw, with horror, Antichrist standing where he ought not, and wondered whether the very earth would gape at our complacency or whether God was asleep.

The message of every saviour and seer has been monotonous in its very simplicity. Flee from the thing that is not, seek and cleave to the thing that is.

What broke the great heart of Christ was not the open villainy of melodrama, not the sin that flaunts itself in the light of day—that, with an infinite understanding, He could pity and forget—it was the solemn make-believe of virtue, the robed and dignified Pharisee calmly acknowledging the salutations of passers by in the street, the grave and respected men of business in the outer courts, the erudite scribes and lawyers, and above all the spectacle of the City of Holy Counterfeit crowned by its Temple of Unreality.

"Ye serpents," He cried, striving passionately for words to express the extremity of His indignation, "ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the wrath of Hell!"

It was essentially the same message as a quaint and ugly old man had preached, with quiet persistency, to the citizens of an Athens that was already fast on the decline. "Don't take anything for granted," that was the gist of it, "examine your knowledge, your morality, even your religion to see that you are dealing with the thing that is and not only with words and formulas. Make your ignorance the basis of your knowledge." For that the respectable people of his

day poisoned at the same draught the body of Socrates and their own souls.

"Prove all things," was the counsel of Paul, "hold fast that which is good." And the Buddha, the enlightened one, merely counselled the men of ritual and formula to rend their hearts and not their garments, and to turn back from illusion to reality.

CHAPTER IX

CREATIVE ART AND REALITY

THERE is one branch of human activity to which it might at first be supposed that the cult of reality has no application. The very function of art—it may be said—is to build up a dream world of its own, to escape out of reality altogether. No doubt there is an element of truth in this, though less than some modern definitions of art would lead us to suppose.

The cult of escaping from reality has only become popular with artists when the ugliness or shame of things as they are has driven the artist to despair of them. Walter Pater was a critic of his age most of all when he wanted to shrink away from it into a cloistral Epicureanism.

If the convenience of historians had not lightened their educational requirements by narrowing their subject to manageable limits, it would long ago have been discovered that the art of an age, including its literature, is the master key to its development. It is the poet, in the old Greek sense of "The maker," who gives form to what every age is trying to express.

To say that the Puritan army won the battle of Naseby is little more than to say that one party of men chased another party, a little more than half its

size, off a big field. But to read the Pilgrim's Progress is to have Puritanism before your eyes and to take it into your very soul. And if you want to know how the enslavement of Italy and the clouding of her Renaissance appeared to the greatest of all Italian patriots, spend an hour among the Medici tombs at Florence and let your soul be wrung with the strong despair of Michelangelo.

The artist cannot escape from reality, even if he tries. Oscar Wilde tried to do so, and yet the future historian, if he is wise, will understand more about the essential 'eighties from the "Sphinx," than from the occupation of Egypt and the split in the Liberal party.

It is no doubt the last resort of Philistinism to endeavour to limit the freedom of the artist by turning him into a preacher, or to make him submit to any other laws than those of the medium through which he chooses to express himself. Mr. de la Mare would be false to himself were he to come out of his world of twilight fancies and it would be the height of absurdity to expect a Picasso to compete with a Watts in the direct criticism of contemporary life.

If an artist expresses his age it will be in spite of himself; he is more likely than not to do himself violence by addressing himself to the task directly. The novelist who writes to punish vice and reward virtue outrages morality in the very act of defending it and lies in the name of truth.

Wagner never lost more time than when he was trying to force music into an unnatural thraldom to

metaphysics. The artist is most the interpreter of life when he is most true to himself and his inspiration.

With the reality of the outside world he is only concerned in an indirect and secondary way. That reality he may fashion to his desire with as little scruple as the vilest hack of commerce or journalism, it all depends upon how far the nature of his undertaking binds him to external fact—the realistic novelist who described unreal men and women would be false to his art.

But the first and great commandment of the artist is to express the inner and spiritual reality of life itself, life that stands confronting that other reality of the outside world, and needs to be raised to its highest level of perfection in order to sustain the encounter. That is what we mean when we say that art thrives as it is true to reality.

The importance of art is now manifest. It is the truest and noblest expression of life. It holds up not a mirror but an ideal, it points the way to what every one in his best moments is striving to attain. It is with a true instinct that men have lavished their brightest powers upon the creation of their gods.

The figures chiselled upon the frieze of the Parthenon or painted on the roof of the Sistine Chapel, the dancing Sivas and preaching Buddhas, are but the soul of the artist striving to have life and to have it more abundantly. They are a call to the beholders to awaken out of sleep, to raise life to a divine level, even if it be out of a swinish contentment into tragedy.

Thus the truth of an artist to reality, his own

reality, constitutes a duty as solemn as ever lay upon statesman or soldier. If he should fail, it is not too much to say that life goes down with him. His is the highest freedom, freedom that is perfect service not to man, but to what, if the term be ever allowable, we must designate as God.

He can only fail by allowing himself to be made a slave, a spiritual prostitute more to be despised than the poor Magdalenes of the streets, for to whom much is given, of him shall much be required. And whenever there is a tendency to flee from reality, it is sure to be reflected by the insincerity and prostitution of contemporary art.

That which deflects the creative genius from the attainment of spiritual reality is the same as that which debars us from appreciating the facts of the outside world. We allow our vision to be deflected by our will, whether we make our art the slave of our passions, in the positive sense, or merely of our negative desire for saving ourselves trouble.

The most common and vulgar passion of all is that of making money, and as artists are usually poor people without even the time for making themselves a living outside of their art, it is apt to prove an insidious and daily temptation.

Never has there been a greater peril than now of the muse being degraded into the paid harlot of Mammon. The tyranny of the old patron was often bad enough and involved an endless, though extraneous and conventional sycophancy. But the patron had at least a soul and sometimes if he were a Lorenzo

de Medici or Duke of Weimar, a soul equal to his high calling.

But the impersonal tyranny of commerce has neither soul nor conscience. It has no other standard of artistic merit than that of pounds, shillings and pence. A good book is the best seller, a good picture that which attracts the richest buyer. The only qualities that give value to a work of art are those which create what economists know as the maximum, effective demand.

It is not likely, however, that money will have it all its own way. As long as there is any nobility in man, it will strive to express itself at all costs, and there are men who would rather die in a garret than sell the key of their souls. But until the artist becomes a creature who can live on air, and despise not only physical privation for himself and those dependent on him, but what is even more rare, that fame which has always been the spur and infirmity of noble minds, he will find himself pitted against an almost irresistible force striving to divert him from his true goal.

The high austerity which regards the plaudits of the crowd with suspicion as affording a presumption of bad work is not too common even in the greatest. And the commercial spirit appeals not only by terror but even more by persuasion.

It is as if Mammon were to take the artist to a high place, and offer him all the sweets of fame and the delights of riches if he will only fall down and worship him. And the service he asks is often, in seeming,

so innocent and straightforward that it is only too easy for the artist to believe that he is selling himself for sheer love and that the money is merely an additional advantage thrown in.

For in the higher grades of art, the sale is seldom acknowledged on either side for what it is. The fashionable novelist, poet, painter, musician is as respected as he is prosperous. His opinion is listened to with respect, his advice publicly sought on every sort of trivial and impertinent question, his private life dragged into an indecent but flattering publicity.

So established a thing is his reputation that it is more than an ordinary reviewer's post is worth to criticise anything that he says in a way calculated to diminish it. To all outward seeming, never did the artist enjoy such power and freedom as to-day. But to what end when, silently and unperceived, the shameful bargain has been completed and the soul lies fast and frozen in the lowest of the nine circles, that is the portion of traitors? We do but hang our garlands on a tomb.

The art of the spiritual procurer has been carried to a rare degree of perfection. It is never his business to frighten the victim, to confront him with the direct challenge of the Tishbite, "if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him." The artist is to be tempted in the very name of his art. To take one of the most common devices of all, he is persuaded to sacrifice the free spiritual energy that procured him his first success, and instead of creating, go on

repeating himself. For the public likes to know where it is with its favourites.

If, let us say, the popular and respectably passionate Miss Rahab Chepe were to face the solution of some subtle spiritual problem such as might engage the attention of Mr. Joseph Conrad, it is likely that the not inconsiderable circle of her customers would feel themselves basely swindled, and there would be a sensational slump in the market for her books.

Or let us suppose that Mr. Kipling, after writing his first excellent stories, had been moved by the spirit —and his is a genius to which it would be dangerous to fix limits—to see British imperialism and Indian civilisation from the standpoint of a patriotic Hindu. It is not improbable that he would have damaged his reputation and lost many of his readers, but he would have kept his own soul. As it is, the nearest to it he could or would approach was in *Kim,* which was written with all the tolerant patronage of the Greater Breed, and in which the most attractive "outsider" is not an Indian at all, but a Thibetan Buddhist, a dear, harmless old creature.

But it is the nature of inspiration never to stand still. The artist moves through a perpetual series of fresh creations. To him repetition is death, and it is both his glory and his burden that with every fresh work of art the work of creation has to begin anew. And the effort of fresh creation calls for a corresponding effort in the beholder. He too has to revise his standards, to address his brain to a wholly new task of appreciation. Indeed, it is not too much to say

that nobody can receive a work of genius without creating it again in his own mind.

This is just what the average member of the public hates to do. He does not want to be set tasks by his own servants, and as such he regards the artist. When he takes out a novel by Mr. W. J. Locke or has his wife's portrait painted by Mr. Shannon * or goes to hear a composition by Sir Edward Elgar he knows what he is paying his money for, and would be as much annoyed if he were to get anything else as if his clergyman were suddenly to announce from the pulpit that the days of religion were over, and then proceed to fox-trot down the aisle with the curate.

For the artist, if he is to cater for the public, must so conform his art as to consult the greatest happiness of the greatest number. And the average member of the public likes to think in a world, not of reality, but of simple and convenient symbols. It will suit him best if the caterer to his æsthetic tastes is himself a symbolic figure, who will not startle him by behaving in an unexpected way. The process of boiling down the man to the symbol is called creating a personality, and it is one in which the artist himself is often only too ready to lend a hand.

The first thing necessary is to have or cultivate or pretend to some characteristic, simple and easy to remember. An unkempt and revolutionary appearance may do well enough, and even in what are sometimes known as "belles lettres" sheer corpulence may carry a weight not measurable in avoirdupois.

* Now Sir Charles Shannon.

If you are a golf professional, and a bit of a character already, you will be instructed that it is better, even on the title page, to alter your Christian name to its familiar nickname. If you are a foreigner, a judiciously broken English may work marvels.

We remember a Japanese artist, not without a certain frail charm of colouring, who made a reputation by writing just the sort of childish patter you would expect from the little toy men and women that the English public, despite the war with Russia, still half-believed the Japanese nation to consist of. The very title of one of his books was *My Idealed John Bullesses,* which he must have known to be incorrect, and yet no doubt was quite right in adopting from the commercial point of view.

But even if the artist refuses to be party to these crude methods of advertisement, the art of puffing a personality is sure to be well enough understood by those who have the office of marketing his works. He must be labelled with power, or subtlety, or boldness (usually a synonym for prurience), or charm, or a peculiarly intimate appeal, and on these lines he must be run for all he is worth. And we may reckon on a willing co-operation on the part of the critics.

It is easier to review a book without cutting it if we know already what we are expected to say about the author. "How often," remarks Mr. J. C. Squire, "have the really great passages of a book I have handled been hermetically sealed"—he means uncut—"whilst I have misjudged the author by more accessible banalities."

Thus, if you have to review Mr. Chesterton, you must not fail to comment upon the real seriousness of the philosophy that underlies his apparent flippancy, you may gently point out that his way of stating his views is a little too one-sided to be perfect, but you must not fail to imply that the faults are all on the surface and that the depths beneath are so profound as to be practically bottomless.

For Mr. W. J. Locke sparkling charm is the obvious lead, for Miss Rose Macaulay an almost demonic cleverness, for Mr. Arnold Bennett a minute observation of human nature and for the poet laureate a muse whose scholarly inspiration will be precious to all true lovers of verse. To proceed on these lines is safe and easy, to depart from them involves not only much unnecessary labour but also trouble with editors.

One result of this commercialising of art is the utter confusion of all values. There is no standard of criticism, not even a bad standard, such as that which prompted the brutalities of the old *Quarterlies* and *Blackwoods*.

When the *Quarterly* was attacking Keats or the *Edinburgh* pronouncing that the *Excursion* would never do, they were at least putting an intelligible case from their own point of view. Their literary standards, however bigoted and perverse, were not dictated primarily by commercial motives. It is a rare thing to find, nowadays, any standard of criticism whatever.

There are two classes of authors, those who have

arrived and those who have not arrived, the former a valuable commercial asset and to be respected accordingly, the latter to be disposed of at the usually good-natured caprice of the critic.

We remember reading two simultaneous reviews of the same book in organs of high repute, one branding it with violence and indecency, the other saying that it was evidently written to satisfy the cravings of emotional curates. No wonder, must have been the author's first reflection, that they talk of disestablishing the Church!

The attitude prescribed for the safe and elderly arbiters of excellence who, having achieved a reputation and income, are no longer compelled to labour at their own personalities, is what may best be described as that of the amiable highbrow.

Anybody, past or present, who has a name, is a safe person to write up, anybody who breathes upon his fame can be swept away with all the sleek scorn of the butler for the Bolshevik, and it is preferable if we can find a minor classic a little out of the beaten track, in order to emphasise our own superiority. Moreover it is an article of faith that failure to appreciate any French author and, above all, any French painter, stamps the Philistine at once.

The changes can be easily and voluminously rung upon such titles as "The countryside of Crabbe," "Stevenson as critic," "The Tahiti of Gauguin," "Bloomfield, the farm boy poet," and "Slugs in English literature." Even if three or more columns on any one of these subjects may be heavy to digest,

their mere presence on study or drawing-room table imparts a sense of culture and security that can hardly be over-estimated.

Corresponding to this type of insincere criticism is the type of uninspired art which, in England at any rate, we can best designate as academic. Where the standard of taste is low, anything pretending to be specially cultured is likely to pass muster, however dull and tame it may be in reality, with critics who have no motive to give themselves away by leaving unappreciated the things that ought to be appreciated.

There is one poet in particular, of lovable personality and distinguished scholarship, who happens seldom to have written a line in all his voluminous works betraying more than a Laodicean talent, and has, in fact, made a specialty of writing metrical exercises of a correct and unvarying docility, but of whom it is customary to speak in necessarily vague terms as if he were, by general consent, fit to occupy the place of Wordsworth and Tennyson, and without a generous sprinkling of whose lyrics no modern anthology would be complete.

Another, hardly less famous, has swollen his achievement to three collected volumes by a simple trick of jingle, vaguely reminiscent of a piano organ two or three streets away, a meaningless if not wholly unpleasing noise.

The Royal Academy itself, that temple of mediocrity and genius that has earned its recognition by ceasing to create, with its open adoration of rank and

money and its appeal to those instincts which are satisfied by the Christmas supplements of magazines, has too long been the target of irreverent comment to leave anything fresh to say about it, except that despite its now established and unenviable reputation it continues to dominate our national art with as ponderous a dignity as the Duke of York's monument looks over the Horse Guards' Parade.

It has, in fact, become so much of a vested interest that a recent attempt to reform it by excluding certain worthy old stagers in favour of some younger and more modern artists, called forth a righteously indignant protest from one of the most inveterate academicians, who claimed for these devotees of the muse the right of perpetual unchallenged representation.

After all, what does it matter? Has not the muses' bower become the same thing as Liberty Hall? Why draw an invidious distinction between one piece of canvas and another?

The evil produced by such anarchic orthodoxy is by no means confined to those who acknowledge it. It engenders, by reaction, a convention of heresy equally anarchic in principle. The desire for something new and the characteristically modern itch to be ahead of the age join hands with the honourable distaste for pretence and mediocrity in creating a demand which makes heresy a marketable proposition.

Here, of course, the commercial motive steps in again. If you are going to run a heretic of any kind,

it is best that he should be one of the most orthodox brand, that is to say, he must be very crude, very bouncing, and must move on lines that the intelligent public knows already and the critic who says "I" and not "we" is accustomed to approve.

The market for heresy is naturally not so large as for that which is frankly conventional, but it is considerable enough to be worth catering for. It is, for most practical purposes of calculation, confined to the upper middle class in the more genteel suburbs.

We have already seen how the boredom and futility of a jerry-built existence engenders in the more intelligent minority of its victims, and particularly among the women, a passion for escape and rebellion. Such a young woman was drawn with great skill by Mr. Wells in his *Ann Veronica.*

Those who have investigated the conditions of life in such areas as Hampstead, will know that they are quite thickly dotted about with little clubs and cliques, representing the intellectual fashion of the hour. These are numerous and affluent enough to make it worth while stoking up their enthusiasm by a constant supply of mystic, Celtic, Buddhist, imagist, vorticist, higher thoughtful and other suitable material.

As genius must find some sort of an outlet, a surprising amount of really good work slips in with the rest, almost unperceived, in spite of conditions which encourage nothing so much as a cheap trick of advertisement.

Examine closely the most approved modern poetry, and you will find a greater resemblance than you

would have expected between the Georgian conventions of the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, despite the fact that the former was consciously orthodox and the latter is nothing if not advanced and youthful, and not forgetting that the great names of Brooke, Flecker, and Mr. Masefield, as well as those of Mr. Davies, Mr. de la Mare, Mr. Hodgson and Mr. Sassoon have been associated with our own Georgian clique, nor that a high standard of craftsmanship has been set under its auspices.

But with each successive issue of a Georgian anthology the convention becomes more tyrannous, and the songcraft more closely allied to the work of reproducing goods to standard. Just as the convention of the eighteenth century may be said to be that of the standard couplet, so our own approximates more and more to that of the standard line or phrase, of the kind always quoted in reviews.

"Soothed by the charity of the deep-sea rain,"

or

"I saw the fading edge of all delight."

to quote at random a couple of examples from an excellent modern anthology, lines that fulfil every requirement of poetry except the supreme one of inspiration.

An even more noticeable feature of this school, and, indeed, most contemporary verse, is its lack of content. Ladies and gentlemen with nothing in particular to say display the utmost taste and in-

genuity in saying it. Occasionally a vivid personal experience strikes a spark of authentic inspiration, as in Mr. Graves' beautiful *Goliath and David,* but such exceptions only serve to deepen, by contrast, the impression that the modern poet is like a man who provides coloured wine glasses for a teetotal banquet. And some of the glasses certainly are surprisingly graceful, but not to the extent of sending the ginger beer to our heads.

We are interested, and pleasantly, in Mr. Nichols' clever imitations of the Elizabethan sonnet, in Mr. Squire's odd rhythmic catalogue of the world's major rivers from Congo to Colorado, in Mr. Freeman's unexceptionable reactions to natural phenomena, but how different is this from the authentic vintage, and how willingly would we sacrifice it all for one such artless and unforced lyric cry as that of the scientist, Sir Ronald Ross, on his discovering the parasite of malaria fever:

> "I know this little thing
> A myriad men will save.
> O Death, where is thy sting?
> Thy victory, O Grave?"

This man, we feel, was in earnest, as white hot as Milton denouncing the massacre in Piedmont or Byron, thundering liberty to Hellas. Heart speaks to heart, by fire fire is kindled. But too much earnestness is not popular. The muse is a demi-mondaine, a geisha, to divert us for an hour beneath the cherry blossoms with her laughter and her wanton

ways; were she to assume the airs of a goddess, her lovers would hesitate whether to laugh or to run away. And yet poetry is the art least of all corrupted by commerce, if only for the reason that even in the suburbs it is difficult to whip up enough demand to make it pay.

The convention of heresy is not so pronounced in poetry as in painting, where, in France and Italy, even more than among ourselves, the wildest extravagances pass muster as a matter of course, where dadaists, futurists, and for aught we know to the contrary, super-post-futurists, flit across the limelight in unending succession, where the clique becomes the mob and the picture the poster, and artists may claim to have discovered the unique commercial secret of marketing their own advertisements.

We must not forget the school of modern drama which has striven, usually in the teeth of financial expediency, to bring the theatre into touch with serious and vital issues. Unhappily, this noble work has been partially frustrated by an unwillingness of its protagonists to trust, as Shakespeare did, to reality and their inspiration. Their plays are, in fact, sermons, the puppets on the stage are worked so as to point a moral.

Such a dramatist as Sir Arthur Pinero may be as shallow and trivial as you please, but his characters are at least more like real men and women than Mr. Shaw's and Mr. Galsworthy's cockshy types, who are put up in order to say ridiculous things and be scored off before the audience.

What Englishman was ever such an improbable ass as Tom Broadbent in *John Bull's Other Island* or the almost imbecile officer in *Great Catherine,* and do judges and members of Parliament talk such pompously obvious nonsense about society, and the rest of it, as when Mr. Galsworthy wants to point one of his excellent lessons in humanity? Being thus didactic, like the old improving novels, these plays are sometimes found dull, and when some Heartbreak or Jawbreak House is left empty of spectators, there is talk of Philistinism.

Let us, at least, be thankful for what we have. The jingoism and decadence of the 'nineties have ceased to attract, and we are getting over the pre-war cult of ugliness and discord as ends in themselves. Art is waiting, like those corpses in the Valley of Dry Bones, which were clothed with flesh and sinew, but in which the breath of life had not yet been kindled.

If any watchword could avail for that inspiration, what more sufficient or glorious could be named than reality, reality for the lack of which art and life perish together? But if either is to be saved, it is no change of words that is needful but one of spirit. Art is a spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth.

CHAPTER X

POLITICS AND REALITY

IF we be right in our view that the present danger to civilisation arises from the failure of mankind to take control over its own destinies, then the phenomenon of political association assumes a special importance. For the state is the outward and formal expression of the collective will, not, as yet, of the whole race, but of as large portions of it as have yet shewn themselves capable of effective combination. It is the multitude thinking and acting as a person.

The title page to the *Leviathan* of Thomas Hobbes represents a monstrous figure of a man made of men, and it is in such a way that we should think of our country. But we would go a step further than Hobbes in postulating that these other men, our countrymen who make up the state, should include not only those living now, but all who ever have borne or will bear, the name of Englishman.

"We are," a dying French soldier beautifully expressed it before Verdun, "but moments in the life of France." Some day, perhaps, these Leviathans, these men of men, will come to regard themselves as moments in the life of mankind.

It is therefore, a matter of vital importance that these invisible personalities, with a life extending over

centuries, should order themselves and us with all wisdom and righteousness. If it is incumbent upon the man to get right with reality, the obligation is even greater upon the state. And of all the evils of our time the most alarming is surely the failure of the state, not only here but in practically every civilised nation, to rise to the height of its responsibility.

It has long been accepted as the shameful axiom of diplomacy that nations in their dealings with each other are not only selfish and violent, but also cunning and treacherous to an extent vaguely limited by treaty and international law, but even Machiavelli himself stopped short of assuming that the state expressed the will, not of the community nor of the legal sovereign, but of whatever corrupt interest could succeed in pulling the wires.

There is indeed, no human institution in which the phrases commonly used to describe it correspond less to the facts of life. When we pick up our newspaper and turn to the political intelligence, few of us realise that nine-tenths of what we are reading is more or less in the nature of camouflage to divert our attention from what is really going on. The things discussed and ventilated in the papers are altogether different from those which excite the interest of men "in the know."

There are, in fact, two distinct worlds of politics. The one is outward and visible, and its changes produce an effect on the public at large of a kind formerly credited to those of the moon, the other is inward and anything but spiritual, it moves in silent and myste-

rious ways, and by its changes, known only to a few expert astrologers, our fates are swayed.

To the Victorians, all these things seemed wonderfully simple and straightforward. Representative government, wisely regulated, was a panacea for all evils.

When the Prince Consort, who, for all his heavy respectability, was a man of more good sense than he is usually credited with, remarked that representative government was on its trial, he was considered to have uttered an almost unthinkable blasphemy. For with the Victorians the verdict had, as usual, preceded the trial. The thing ought to succeed and therefore was a success. It seemed so obvious a truth that where everybody had a voice in choosing the men who should govern him, the interests of everybody, or at least of the majority, would be consulted.

The radical philosophy of which John Stuart Mill was the most authoritative and temperate exponent proceeded on the assumption that, by gradually broadening the basis of representation, the chronic tyranny of the privileged and selfish few over the many would become a memory of past ages.

Mill himself was keenly alive to the difficulties of preventing the majority from tyrannising over the minority, but that, roughly speaking, power would follow the vote, neither he nor any one of his contemporaries seems to have doubted. And when the democratic franchise of 1867 was passed into law, there were those who, like Robert Lowe, imagined that the tyranny of the mob had come into being and

that the whole social fabric was in danger of dissolution.

Very different was the reality. The cool and far-sighted Disraeli had made no miscalculation when he persuaded the stiff and reactionary Tory squires that their best interests lay in dishing the Whigs by outbidding them with Demos. It is almost certain, however, that he had no knowledge of the way in which the ostensible purpose of the franchise would be defeated. He trusted to the enlightened leadership of the gentry securing the free loyalty of the people, it had been his dream since the days of "Young England."

But the gentry were by no means enlightened and were on the point of becoming merged in a plutocracy. It was money and not birth that eventually secured the control of the franchise. For, in truth, the second Reform Bill had placed in the hands of the people an instrument of power which they were quite incompetent to use. They were a multitude of isolated individuals, with less common purpose than a flock of sheep.

John Smith, with a vote in his hand, found himself not a tyrant but a groping animalcule in a sea of which he only knew his immediate surroundings. He was called not to dictate a policy but to put a cross opposite the name of either William Browne, J.P., or Sir Thomas Robinson, gentlemen whose principles and personalities were profoundly unknown to him.

The art of anticipating and guiding the opinions of John Smith in the mass was one already extensively

practised in commerce. The same arts that could induce him to buy shoddy goods could no doubt be used to make him vote for the shoddy policies of shoddy candidates, who could be trusted to act as obedient middlemen between the public and their masters. It was, of course, all-important for it never to get about that this was being done.

If John Smith were once to realise that he was both a slave and a dupe, alarm and indignation might teach him the secret of becoming a tyrant in good earnest. Accordingly democracy must become a catchword of the same nature as Christianity. Anybody who called, "Lord, Lord!" to Demos was assumed to be a loyal member of his kingdom, and it would be as grave a breach of decorum to question the democracy of the English state as the Christianity of the English Church.

The result is that scarcely an inkling of the real history of the last half-century has been allowed to get into the history books. We are almost invariably treated to accounts of the growth of democracy, as if the forms of power were the same thing as its reality. Very rarely are we given the least hint that the most important political event of all has been the successful conspiracy to render these forms wholly devoid of content, and to set up the rule of Dives in the name of Lazarus.

It must not be supposed that the art of circumventing the franchise is one peculiar to England. It has accompanied democracy as disease used to follow in the wake of armies. And it is not without significance

that as the vocabulary of modern war is mostly French, so that of political corruption is almost entirely American. Caucus, boodle, gerrymander, graft and boss are wafted to our shores with a distinct Yankee twang.

But English corruption can at least plead the distinction of greater antiquity. Our very word baronet can claim a certain affinity with Tammany, being the name of an office created by an English King for the frank and sole purpose of selling it. And the United States might never have come to exist at all, had not the English politics of the eighteenth century been a sink of corruption.

It is one of the ironies of history that the first decisive move in the shepherding of the electorate was the result of a genuine effort to make its power effective. What was known as a fancy franchise had been imposed by Disraeli's reform Bill upon the city of Birmingham, each elector was to be allowed two votes for three seats in order to give the minority as well as the majority the chance of being represented in Parliament.

But the practical interpretation usually placed upon democracy has been the unlimited legal despotism of the hundred over the ninety and nine, and the radicals of Birmingham, being the majority at the time, were furious that anybody but themselves should have a voice in choosing a member.

Accordingly, a group of able and strong-willed men, of whom the principal was Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, conceived the idea of forming the electors of their

party into a voluntary and disciplined army. Every voter was to be instructed which two of the three Radical candidates he was to vote for, in order that there might be no overlapping.

The immediate result of this experiment was a complete success, the purpose of the fancy franchise to give the minority a chance was defeated and this kind of franchise soon disappeared from the Statute Book. But the success of the Birmingham caucus, as it was called, had been so striking that it was not allowed to die with the attainment of its immediate object.

On the contrary, it was developed and strengthened, and so brilliant seemed the idea of disciplining the electorate, that it was taken up by both of the principal parties in the state. The essence of the caucus consisted in its combining the form of democracy with the reality of a secret and centralized despotism.

A central organisation, financed nobody knew how and controlled nobody knew by whom imposed its candidates on the constituencies and its will on these candidates when they were elected. The Prime Minister himself was reduced to a position corresponding to that of Jove in the old mythology, the all-worshipped father of the universe, who is yet powerless in his omnipotence against the fates who sit and spin in secret.

The most powerful statesmen were helpless in the grip of the machine. Even Gladstone's right-hand man, Mr. Forster, sunk into the grave exhausted by

a losing fight for his own independence, and that doughtiest of old-fashioned radicals, Joseph Cowen, who refused to sell his soul to the caucus, was persecuted, attacked by ruffians in the street, and finally driven to retire from his constituency of Newcastle in disgust and weariness.

It was hopeless for any ordinary candidate to advertise himself successfully to the electors without the co-operation of the caucus and if, once elected, he was rash enough to display a will of his own, the whole power of the machine could be turned, impalpable yet overwhelming, on to his constituency, which would rapidly become too hot to hold him.

The spirit of competitive sport, which is such a feature of this latest period of our history, was of inestimable value to the caucus bosses. Nobody was more delighted with the idea of playing the party game in its utmost rigour than the old landed gentry, who had the tradition of the rotten boroughs in their blood and the spoils of the common lands in a grasp that they did not mean to relax.

The sport of dishing the radicals was, to them, almost on a par with that of hunting the fox, and it is extraordinary to what depths of trickery and tyranny they could descend when once the sporting instinct was fairly roused.

Gladstone, in particular, was assailed with a coarseness and venom from which his years and character as well as the *noblesse oblige* of his opponents might have saved him. But neither of the two factions, for it would be a misnomer to speak of them by a more

respectful name, could fairly claim a superiority in the arts of corruption.

But here we must make a qualification by the ignoring of which the opponents of the caucus have succeeded in discrediting their case in the eyes of temperate men. It is absurd to go to the length of speaking of all of our statesmen as corrupt scoundrels or scoundrelly Jews for no better reason than that they have stooped to conformity with a system that they must have known was dishonest. To talk thus is to display a woful ignorance of human nature.

A man who has the choice between devoting powers that he feels within him to his country's service, and dropping ignominiously and unheeded out of any chance of usefulness, must often convince himself that it is better to wink at what he is powerless to prevent than to break his lance against windmills.

Such a choice was forced upon the elder Pitt, in whom the love of his country was a passion, and who, though a poor man, had deliberately refused to accept for himself the customary perquisites of office. He found that he could only remain in power at a time when he rightly judged his leadership to be necessary to the country, by allying himself with the corrupt Duke of Newcastle.

The alliance was concluded, Newcastle was left to do the dirty work (and in fairness it should be said that it was for his party's, not his own, advantage), while Pitt raised England out of the valley of humiliation to the summit of triumph in the Seven Years' War.

To give the Devil less than his due is only to put sympathy on his side, and the man who attacks our political system by making out Lord Grey of Falloden a hack, or Mr. Balfour a fool puts himself out of court. Perhaps nothing has so weakened the criticism of our political system as the effort of some of its best known assailants to turn the whole affair into an anti-Semitic melodrama.

What has actually happened is the natural and almost inevitable result of the great failure of life to adjust itself to reality. Politics has merely been brought into line with commerce and every other branch of human activity. To turn against individual politicians as if they were a species of malevolent reptile is as unjust as it is ridiculous.

Even when we speak of a conspiracy to defeat the logical implications of democracy we are using language that requires careful qualification. For the conspiracy though real, is largely unconscious and unorganised, the conspirators are probably more apt to regard themselves as the driven than the drivers.

The ownership of great possessions, as the greatest of all seers into human nature divined, is in itself a compulsion upon the owner. It commits him to their defence, the "haves" can hardly help banding themselves together against the "have-nots." The caucus was not, in England at any rate, the invention of plutocracy, but the opportunity of using it for their own purposes was too obvious and simple for those having riches to neglect. They were not necessarily

either more villainous or more subtle than any other class of men.

But what is it that gives the rich man his "pull" over the caucus, and therefore over the state? How is it that the instinct of men to unite for political purposes is not sufficient to run the machinery it has brought into being? The reason is simple—the motive power of the caucus is money, and for it to be run efficiently a continuous and lavish supply is essential. Its powers of advertisement and suggestion need to be so great as to make it hopeless for any individual to oppose them. And the very business of opposing and competing with the other caucus forces both the pace and price of the game.

The obvious way of raising funds is by levying a subscription upon members of the party. This, ostensibly, is what is done, and, in the so-called Labour party, has to be done efficiently. But the enthusiasm of the ordinary man for his party, especially when that party has ceased to stand for any intelligible principle, is seldom great enough to loosen his purse strings to any sufficient extent.

Where a man cannot see the result of his generosity, he is apt to rely on that of the man next door and the genteel class has too little instinct for combination to submit to a regularly assessed levy. And yet the money has got to be raised somehow, or the caucus will cease to function.

There is only one way in which the necessary fuel can be brought to the machine. Those whom the vicissitudes of commerce have endowed with a superfluity

of wealth, and whose subscriptions can easily run into thousands of pounds, must be induced to supply what funds may be needful. But this can only be done by offering a "quid pro quo."

Now the caucus that happens to be on the top controls the resources of the state. It may be unable to divert public funds into its own coffers, but through its control of the executive it is, in practice, the fountain of public honour, and by its control of the majority in the Commons, it can, within certain limits, dictate or veto legislation.

Both these functions can, and, unless the caucus is to perish by inanition, must be employed to raise money. Even the prospect of their use will be sufficient to attract funds when the party is out of office.

The sale of honours has been so open and flagrant that nobody has been able to defend it, and so necessary a part of the system that few have dared to kick against the pricks by attacking it.

The instinct that makes it the summit of a man's ambition to put "Lord" or "Sir" before his name might repay study. It is curiously irrational, for the new lord is honoured for his money, which he had before, more than for a title about whose origin nobody is deceived. But a title is the hall mark of that gentility after which the whole middle class groans in travail until now, and there is no moment of purer or more mystical ecstasy in the life of the suburban-bred woman than that in which she first hears herself addressed as "Your ladyship."

Into such secrets of the heart it would be irreverent

to pry. Suffice it that the demand for this strangely styled honour has been so steady and so opulently backed as to have made this form of corruption a regular part of our political system—so much so that since the quite recent formation of the caucus, some four-hundred and fifty peerages and innumerable lesser honours have been conferred.

It should be remembered, however, that certain of these are given not as a return for money but as a reward for obedience—officious venality must have its price—and a very few for real merit of some kind, to keep up a pretence of honesty for the system.

With legislation the problem is not quite so simple. It is not pretended that laws are put up to sale as if they were titles. It was, indeed, said that the National Insurance scheme of 1911 was a deliberate ramp on the part of certain great insurance companies, and that certain heads of these, who also contributed largely to the Unionist party funds, prevented that party from serious opposition to the bill.

This charge, though very noisily asserted, was, however, not backed by a tittle of serious evidence, and was suspiciously coloured by anti-Semitic prejudice. It must, however, be added that to produce more than most indirect evidence of a corrupt bargain which, if made at all, would be verbal and in strict secrecy, would be a task of almost superhuman magnitude.

It can safely be asserted that the caucus is not going to cut its own throat by legislation likely to be openly offensive to those who supply it with funds. And this

merely negative corruption may, by imperceptible degrees, take on a positive aspect.

It is at any rate a fact that so shrewd a man as Cecil Rhodes thought it worth his while to conciliate the Irish Nationalist Party by a little backsheesh, though in fairness it must be allowed that his sympathy with the Home Rule cause was genuine and consistent.

It is impossible to imagine any too great delicacy in those who condescend to a system whose very basis is corruption. One of the most successfully hushed up scandals of our time is the flagrant fact that those who have the running of it neither will nor dare submit to an audit of their party funds.

That the origin and disposal of these enormous funds should be open and above board is so elementary a dictate of honesty and common sense that we can hardly imagine anybody seriously disputing it. Those who are asked to subscribe for purposes avowedly public-spirited and patriotic have surely a right to know how their money is being spent. Even the shadiest club would hesitate to brand itself as an open swindle by declining an audit.

There can be only one reason for the caucus making this vile refusal, that it dares not reveal where and how it gets and spends its money, that it loves darkness rather than light because its deeds are evil. Our political system is, in fact, founded on a basis of secret and shameless corruption, and is infected with a gangrene which is bound, in time, to reach every limb and

poison the whole body. The very mother of Parliaments has become a harlot.

The first result of this evil state of things must be a general lowering of public honesty and conscience. Those who have swallowed a camel by accepting the system as a whole, are not likely to strain at any casual gnat of jobbery or falsehood. One form of corrupt power which we have not yet considered is that wielded by the executive in the control, not only of honours, but of appointments.

How deeply such a public service as the army may be affected by the impalpable yet formidable power which is known as "influence" is the common knowledge of any one at all familiar with military circles. The veil hiding the dirty and cynical intrigue that was rife behind the scenes during the crisis of the war has been only partially lifted by happily indiscreet memoirs.

There were hardly any limits to what might be done with the aid of the right people. Jobs might be found for incompetents and an honourable safety for cowards—indeed much of what murmuring there was against conscription was due to the shrewdly suspected fact that one of a gentleman's privileges, if he chose to exercise it, was that of saving his skin.

But what is most serious of all is that in the very department of life in which a sense of reality is most imperative, the divorce from it is most complete. The whole political world is one of elaborate make-believe. The things that are seen and discussed are but shadows thrown on the screen by those whose busi-

ness it is to divert investigation from what lies behind. The real issues are just those which the rich men on whom the caucus depends do not want brought to the fore.

However well they may be bamboozled into quiescence, the majority has still the power of the vote, and if they could only find the secret of using it, or be confronted with a direct and real issue of their will against that of their masters, might effect a most alarming redistribution of wealth and privilege. The only way in which this can be prevented is by accomplishing what Abraham Lincoln too guilelessly believed to be an impossibility, the feat of fooling all the people all the time.

The competitive spirit must be aroused. The election must be treated as if it were an enormous voting match between the red colour and the blue. Enough grandiloquent talk must precede it to create the impression that something is going to be done, enough window dressing must take place after it to make it possible to advertise that something has been done.

Thus, at one election, a great deal of play was made with a song to the effect that God had created the land for the people and in which the voters were supposed to ask why, with the ballot in their hand, they should be beggars. The only reasonable implication of such a song was that a redistribution of land on the most generous scale was in contemplation, that the old commons were at last coming back to the common people.

Of course the party which made use of this appeal had no idea of accomplishing anything of the sort, and made no pretence of doing so when it came into office beyond evincing signs of an intention, cut short by the war, of using the land cry, in a slightly altered form, for another campaign. Ever since the "three acres and a cow" of the 'eighties, the susceptibility of Hodge to such appeals has been notorious, and his optimism seemingly limitless.

It is remarkable with what success the all-dominating social issue has hitherto been burked at elections, or reduced to a secondary importance. The Home Rule controversy provided the main interest for the three elections preceding 1900, in those of 1900 and 1918 a wave of patriotism directed at a foreign enemy was used to divert attention from domestic issues, the two elections of 1910 were fought over a squabble with the peers, and the only election in which the social question was really to the fore was that which carried the "Liberal" party to power in 1906.

At that time the country was both sick and suspicious of the party in office, whom it rightly regarded as averse to any sort of reform, and the powerful trades' unions were thoroughly aroused by a judicial decision subversive of their privileges for many years past, and greeted with ill-disguised satisfaction by that party.

The Liberals, perhaps rashly in the heat of the contest, allowed themselves to be committed to a generous policy of social reform, and the electorate, confronted at last with this as a direct issue, voted for it

with enthusiasm, returning the Liberals to power by a record majority.

What followed is of great interest. Instead of doing anything serious to carry out their promise, beyond a grudging reinstatement of the trades' unions in their privileges and a pitifully exiguous dole to the aged poor, the victorious party set itself to a long course of deliberate camouflage.*

The first session was mainly devoted to an educational measure which was concerned, not with the pressing need of training up the younger generation on sane and honest lines, but with an obscure quarrel between two sects professing some not very obvious connection with Christ.

The next session saw a scheme for reforming Ireland which was probably not intended to pass, and in fact did not. Then appeared a grossly unpopular measure designed to amend by force of law the drunken habits of the common people whose champions the party in power professed to be.

If one of the principal charges brought against the party system had been true, that the whole game was arranged in amity behind the scenes between the two front benches, this might have succeeded even better than it did. But if the rivalry of principles is a sham, that for power and office is genuine enough, and the profound and far-sighted knaves who are supposed to pull the wires have no counterparts in real life. The devil is an ass.

* Their bold and really liberal grant of free constitutions to the annexed Boer Republics must, however, be counted to them for righteousness.

The House of Lords, now the pliant tool of the Unionist caucus, in its eagerness to secure an advantage, nearly gave the game away altogether. It threw out the unpopular Liberal measures one after the other, and for three years the record majority found itself in a position of ridiculous impotence. The bluff had, in fact, been called, and the calling of bluffs is not healthy for a system whose whole success depends on their passing unchallenged.

The reply of the Liberals was ingenious. They patched up a Budget, a clumsy piece of finance designed less to benefit the country than to irritate the Lords. Their success was almost more than they could have hoped. The Lords, with a light-heartedness that is almost incredible, allowed themselves to be persuaded into violating a constitutional principle of more than two-hundred years' standing by throwing the Budget back in the face of the Commons.

It was a dangerous move, for the gilt was now fast wearing off the party gingerbread. The Liberals did their best by sending up rockets to announce a revolution, but the electorate, now thoroughly fed up, were wishing a plague upon both factions impartially.

There seemed, however, no way of escape. A newly formed Labour Party was almost indecently eager to conform with the system and had given few signs either of independence or initiative. It was not that the country was less sick of the Liberals but that it was more sick of the Lords, and the Northern manufacturing districts were firm against the Unionist re-

vival of protection, another red herring that had been drawn across the social trail.

A bored and apathetic electorate, in two successive elections, allowed the existing government to continue in office for want of a better, but by a majority now dependent upon the one party that seriously meant business, that of the Irish nationalists.

Ireland has been the Nemesis of the party system, for here the politicians have been brought up against a reality of which no amount of camouflage and trickery can suffice to dispose. It is formidable enough, in all conscience, to demand the highest qualities of statesmanship backed by patient enquiry into the facts, and to make it part of an insincere game is sheer suicide. This is, however, exactly what was done. And yet the outstanding facts of the situation might have been plain enough to any one who cared to enquire into them.

Ireland is divided into two distinct communities, one concentrated in the North-East corner of the island, like an overflow from the British mainland, with a temperament and tradition bitterly hostile to that of the rest of Ireland, and the other dreamy, mercurial, but endowed with a ruthless logic the very opposite to the English spirit of compromise and a sense of nationality that centuries of wrong have sharpened almost to madness.

And the problem was complicated by the fact that England was engaged in forcing a hated and clumsy rule upon Ireland, and that nothing would satisfy Irish nationalism but to force an equally hated rule

upon the Northern Protestants who were—a fact incredible to the politicians—really determined to die rather than yield.

Some strange fatality ordained that England should shew her worst and stupidest side in dealing with Ireland. Gladstone, who no doubt was thoroughly sincere, once he had committed himself to the championship of Home Rule, was only converted to it when the Nationalists for the first time held the balance of power.

The attitude of the Conservatives was even less defensible. Lord Salisbury, through his Irish Secretary, Lord Carnarvon, succeeded in convincing the lucid intelligence of Parnell that the Conservatives were ready with a Home Rule plan of their own, when Gladstone made his bid, and the whole force of the Conservative party was flung into violent opposition to the very scheme with which it had been coquetting.

A fatal and vicious situation was now created, which debarred all chance of peace in Ireland, and was exactly calculated to fan every smouldering grievance into a flame of hatred and civil war.

By the logic of the game, one caucus had become committed to a tyranny of England over Ireland and the other to a no less odious tyranny of Catholic Ireland over the Protestant North East. The idea of civil war was played with as if it were a toy, and it was considered a clever hit when one of the keenest players of all told Ulster, which assuredly did not need telling, that it would be right to fight.

However, the politicians were only too glad to leave

Home Rule alone as a practical proposition, so long as Ireland did not count in the game. But when the Nationalists held the balance between the Liberals and the Lords, there was no help for it but to buy their support by introducing a Home Rule Bill of the only sort they would tolerate, one that submitted the Protestant North East to the despotism of a Nationalist majority.

It is probable that neither side meant to push matters to extremities. They were not men of iron, and to do them justice, not cruel, and it was no doubt anticipated that at the last moment a compromise would be arrived at by which the government could repudiate, under plea of necessity, their inconvenient pledge about Ulster.

But the terrible reality of Irish politics had not been reckoned with by the men of pretence. While one English party was playing at civil war, and retired officers were collecting the wherewithal to buy arms to shoot down British soldiers, Ireland was preparing for war in grim earnest.

The Protestants bound themselves by the name of God to resist oppression, and an army sprang into being, to the secret joy of the mighty foe who was all the time plotting for the mastery of the world, and who willingly co-operated with the party of patriotism and the Empire in the supply of arms. A Nationalist army began to take form, equally hostile to Protestant Ulster and to England. To add to the difficulties of the situation, an abortive attempt to cut the knot with

the sword shewed that the army was not to be relied upon to march against Ulster.

The situation was now beyond the control of the politicians, whose feeble efforts to smooth matters over were baffled by the fact that neither Irish party would hear of compromise, and that their leaders were plainly warned that nothing less than murder would be the penalty of their conceding an inch.

It was thus that, by the reckless folly of our political system, the country was brought to the verge of a disaster from which she was only saved, just in time, by the declaration of the European war, a war which might have been averted altogether had it not been for the encouragement our Irish troubles afforded to our enemies, and which has left us with an Ireland now inflamed to a bitterness which renders it a moot question whether her independence would not be a lesser evil than her forcible retention in the Empire. At least we have to be thankful for the partial recognition of the fact that Ireland is not one nation but two.*

The disastrous consequences of a political system founded in corruption and depending for its life upon make-believe could hardly be better exemplified. We cannot always rely upon the chapter of accidents to interpose between our mistakes and our ruin. We have the lesson of the Tsardom before our eyes to shew what happens to a governing class that goes on ignoring reality to the end.

The fact that the collective expression of our will is

* Written in August, 1921, and justified, I venture to think, in the light of subsequent events.

balked and our eyes blinded by those we elect for our leaders constitutes a decisive obstacle to any hope of reform. Nor is the cure by any means a simple matter, for the cause is not in any individual or party, but in the state of mind and education which renders the many the easy dupes of any one who finds it worth while to dupe them.

One thing, however, is possible, and that is to oppose this organised campaign of lies by the truth upon every occasion, in season and out of season. We are making ourselves parties to the deception whenever, through laziness or ignorance, we fall in with the assumptions on which it is based.

When we allow ourselves to speak of the names of parties as if these stood for principles and were not merely the labels of competing factions, when we get wildly excited at such deliberately raised storms in teacups as those about Welsh Disestablishment and sectarian education, and forget such criminal negligence as the shelving of the Poor Law Commission's report, when we are bounced into talking as if the only alternatives for an Irish policy were a Unionist and a Nationalist tyranny, then we are basely surrendering the fort of truth to its enemies.

It is the part of a patriotic citizen boldly to proclaim just those very things which an interested convention has made taboo. His duty is to seek and ensue reality in thought, word and need, no matter what passions he may arouse and what canons of taste he may infringe.

In the darkest hour he has at least this faith to sus-

tain him—that the truth which is on his side is stronger than all the lies which are against him. And it will behove him to be careful lest the very righteousness of his indignation carry him into unjust and unproven attacks, which have only the effect of knocking his sword out of his hand and depriving him of his sole advantage over the thing he assails. To lie in the name of the truth is the most futile of all paradoxes.

Nor will it be of much avail to trust to this or that legislative nostrum. A bill making compulsory the audit of all party funds, and making the direct or indirect sale of honours or appointments a felony to be expiated in gaol, would be a notable triumph of common sense and national righteousness and is an object that all men of good-will will combine to promote, but it would be too much to expect, in the light of past history, that means would not be discovered of evading it.

The resources of corruption are legion, it is a disease which may be cut out of one part of the organism merely to make its appearance in another. No act of legislation will avail, there must be the fixed and enlightened determination to see the whole truth and act for the whole community—that and nothing else.

CHAPTER XI

REALITY AND THE SOCIAL SYSTEM

THE investigation in the last chapter has been necessary, because it is impossible to separate the practice of politics from the theory of society. Politics is society trying to control itself, and if the political system is honeycombed with falsehood or corruption, it is not likely that the most promising schemes of reform will succeed in "making good."

This is a fact too apt to be forgotten by those who write about this or that way of perfecting the social system, as if thinking about these things were as simple a matter as working them. It is one of the most pathetic of fallacies.

Some brilliant and youthful enthusiast, burning with a generous ardour to make the world better, will produce a book sparkling with the promise of things which would be possible in a world of men and women as single-hearted as himself.

If he is a national guildsman, he postulates a community of generous and enlightened workmen co-operating to set up a fair and just system and the other classes loyally submitting to a sympathetic and gradual confiscation of their property.

If he should be a new brand of Tory, he has visions of an upper class public-spirited and enlightened,

commanding the willing allegiance of a prosperous and contented people. Perhaps his book is even good enough for him or it to be worth using for purposes very different from his own.

Even in theory, it is but following the will-o'-the-wisp to lose touch with reality. These brilliant treatises are, for the most part, no more than essays in constructing a dream world according to our desires, and their castles in the clouds are of a kind only built upon vapour.

Our aspiring reformer, if he should be considered worth patronising by the real new Tories, will find them largely to consist of young and middle-aged sportsmen, with a hearty contempt for every other class and way of life than their own, and a shrewd determination, coloured by patriotic sentiment, to stick by any means to everything they have got.

If, on the other hand, he should be taken up by the extreme left, he will find himself in an atmosphere of short-sighted hatred, a desire less to realise a happier state of things than to get even with the other classes by getting hold of their property, or else he may be landed into the trivial round of labour politics, an imbroglio of personal jealousy, of suspicion between comrade and comrade and union and union, and of petty intrigue that will soon take the fine edge off his democratic idealism.

It is one of the most ancient of social fallacies to talk of the world as if it were fashioned not out of reality but out of dreams. Any scheme of reform has got to be worked upon men and through men. It is

impossible suddenly to arrest the long process of historical development and to act as if men were more or less similar units without a past and with a future according to taste. There have been no greater scourges of humanity than incomplete theorists to whom some sudden turn of the wheel has given the power of experimenting with their theories.

Such a man was Robespierre, the honest figurehead of scoundrels who had no illusions and flung his pedantic head into the basket as soon as it ceased to be useful to them; such another, in all probability, is that embittered Russian gentleman who calls himself Lenin. And the worst of living among unrealities is that it engenders a peculiar pitilessness towards the obstinate flesh and blood that will not conform to the dream.

The young Robespierre lost his judicial post because he would not condemn a man to death, and it is conceivable that the disposition of Lenin may be no more unkindly than his face.

Nobody has any right to advocate a new order of society before he has visualised, with all possible explicitness, how this is to be brought about, not in Utopia or Nowhere or Cloud Cuckoo Land, but in the actual world around him, with all its present sordidness and conflict of interests. Otherwise he runs the danger of becoming a veritable social pest. His honest eloquence will be used only to gild the dishonest schemes of interested persons. In particular, it will have a disastrous effect on what moral sense may abide in masses of men.

Those who would hesitate deliberately to ruin innocent people by taking all that they have, will be righteously indignant at their recalcitrance if the operation is called a scientific redistribution of property. And comfortable people will cheerfully tolerate slums and starvation for others if any effort to realise better conditions can be labelled "waste" or "Bolshevism." The merciless man closes his eyes to reality in order that he may, with a cheerful conscience, close his ears to pity.

There is one form of leaving the facts out of account which is almost universal in schemes for reforming society on a democratic basis. The projector first outlines in more or less detail how the democratic state will proceed to order things upon wise and scientific lines, and at the same time provides every conceivable safeguard for making it the genuine expression of the people's will. What guarantee he has that a casual majority of almost uneducated men will conform to any of his lofty intentions he never thinks of explaining.

It is as if he were to say, "Here is a thousand pounds, half of it ought to be invested in Midland preferred and the other half it would be well to confer upon that excellent institution the Banana Mission. I shall now proceed to throw it out of the window to be scrambled for by small boys who will no doubt accurately carry out my intentions." Not a whit less absurd is the framing of elaborate social policies in the faith that Tom, Dick and Harry will maintain and defend them.

Something of what does, in fact, happen to such schemes has been seen, time and again, in Municipal politics, both here and abroad. Money has been raised or sweated out of the ratepayers for purposes of the most plausible and progressive showing, and has paid for an inefficient bureaucracy giving the minimum of advantage to those for whose benefit it is supposed to be, and the maximum of profit to those who have been loudest in their talk about principles.

Ask how it is that every facility is afforded to some mismanaged and expensive gas company while a notoriously more efficient electrical service is discouraged, and you may find that it is less due to scientific or economic theorising than to the too practical consideration that most of the local representatives are shareholders in the gas company. This is to take a particularly mild and everyday instance.

The Bolshevik régime in Russia is an instance on the grand scale of what happens to the best laid schemes of theorists when they are worked by astute egoists in the midst of an ignorant or apathetic electorate. And yet, so much is mankind the slave of words, that sentiment is still lavished in ultra-democratic quarters on the "people's soviets."

The social problem has been clouded by the two fallacies of thought which we have already examined, that of thinking in a passion and that of simplifying the facts in order to avoid trouble.

When men think either of their class or their politics, their passions are generally too vigorously aroused to permit of their taking an impartial view of

the situation. And they simplify the facts by leaving out every portion and aspect of them that does not fit in with their dream world, and so transmuting or even inventing the rest as to make them the perfect mirror of their desires.

Recent research has revealed a function of the subconscious mind that plays a not inconsiderable part in the determination of social opinions. It is called repression, and it means the faculty of keeping from the light of consciousness any thought or memory that arouses unpleasant associations. There are, in fact, some things about which the mind maintains a conspiracy of silence even against itself.

The author remembers an instance of one fairly common surname which on two separate and distinct occasions he not only unaccountably forgot, but for which his memory substituted other names, slightly similar, as if trying to suggest a way out of an unpleasant situation. So curious was this twice-repeated "shying-off" the same apparently common-place name, that enquiry was deemed worth while into the cause, and it turned out that this name was associated with an extremely unpleasant and humiliating incident many years previously, which had almost faded from conscious memory.

Trivial as this incident may be, it illustrates a way in which the mind frequently works in dealing with the most important matters. There are certain indecencies, as it were, of thought that one does not like to repeat even to one's own brain.

Take the controversies that centre round that very

elastic word "democracy," and seldom lead to any profitable issue because it is not often that any one likes to have his real views on this subject so closely examined as to reveal their divergences from what they are supposed to be. We are all, at any rate in public, democrats more or less, just as the most respectable and self-righteous of us are ready to gabble ourselves miserable sinners for the purposes of the Litany.

When President Wilson talked about making the world safe for democracy most of us breathed a pious assent, and tacitly regarded the invitation as equivalent to one for ridding the world of as many Germans as possible. Only one or two honest squires sometimes had the temerity to confide to each other, when the female substitute for the butler had left with the coffee tray:

"That's all eyewash, you know. Hanged if one wouldn't sooner have the old Kaiser, only of course one mustn't say so."

When Plato and Aristotle discussed democracy, without any of our modern enthusiasm, they were quite clear in their own minds as to what they were talking about. Democracy meant the power of the people, neither more nor less. And in modern representative governments the power of the people comes to be the same thing as the sovereignty of a majority.

If the dark headed people of the community were in ever such a slight majority, and managed to decree the death by torture of all the fair-headed, that, according to the convention of representative govern-

ment, would be a thoroughly democratic measure. "But," as Euclid was wont to remark, "this is absurd."

Democracy has landed itself in difficulties, but as we are all democrats, it has got to be kept upon its pedestal somehow. Here, very often, steps in the political philosopher, with his ingenious distinctions between the general will and the will of all, and his genial assumption that whatever democracy may be, it is something pleasing and workable, even if the word has to be taken in a Pickwickian or Hegelian sense to make it so.

The one question to which people either cannot or will not address themselves is, taking democracy in its linguistic and commonsense meaning as the utmost power of the people or a majority of them, how this is to be made effective, what are going to be its results, and whether these are good or bad.

We have seen how, largely owing to sheer confusion of thought, modern democracy has come to mean the giving of power to the people by the franchise, and the taking of it away by the caucus, a fact that has yet to find its way into treatises on what is quaintly called "political science."

But let us suppose that the caucus is swept away, a thing not at all likely under the auspices of any Labour organisation at present existing, and that the majority find some means of procuring the persons they want to execute the policy they want. Is this a contingency that the advocates of democracy in the abstract have ever attempted to visualise in the concrete?

We know how wofully misinformed are the majority of people about the simplest affairs, how easily masses of men can be guided or stampeded into this or that opinion, how small an interest the vital issues of life arouse as compared with its trivialities, and yet we cheerfully face the conclusion that the united suffrages of individuals so manifestly unfitted for public responsibility will evolve a sane and desirable management of public affairs.

By broadening the basis of the franchise we automatically lower the educational and intellectual standard of the average elector, and yet we hail this solution as if it were the most obvious of panaceas.

This is not intended as a refutation of the democratic idea, but as a warning against treating anything so complicated and bristling with difficulties as if it were the merest commonplace. By so doing, we should not even be good democrats, for we should merely be giving a formal assent to the word while registering a subconscious determination to evade the thing.

There is neither sense nor virtue in trusting to the blind faith that is the last refuge of intellectual dishonesty. If we believe that the flock is wiser than the sheep or that a number of uneducated men can make up for their disadvantages by acting together, let us at least be clear as to our grounds for so doing. Too often, when examined, they resolve themselves into sheer flunkeydom to Demos, or into a fatalistic resolve that what cannot be altered had better be believed in.

We allow ourselves to be labelled this or that, we are democrats or socialists or revolutionaries as if that settled everything, or as if it were a matter of the least importance to ourselves or anybody else under what kind of word we choose to masquerade. Directly we have acquired, at second hand, our distinguishing brand of opinion, we cease to think or to see. We are no longer seekers, we know the truth. To take a few examples from ordinary conversation:

"My dear fellow, you can hardly expect me, as a Catholic, to sympathise with you."

"I don't know what you think you're driving at, but I warn you that I'm not going to have any Radicals in my house, so take care."

"But that directly violates the first principles of Free Trade."

"No, comrade, that is just what the Capitalist press says."

"Do you mean to insult women?"

If we would save ourselves and society, we must at all costs regain our singleness of vision. We can only become partisans by ceasing to be men. In that Kingdom of Heaven which is the Kingdom of Truth, there is neither party nor dogma, and they look out upon the world, not as if they expected to find confirmation for what they already believe, but with all the enquiring wonder of a child who catches his first glimpse of the sea. Only by such means does life maintain a perpetual freshness and the ennui which is worse than death is kept at a distance.

It is no part of our purpose to enter into competi-

tion with those who offer patent devices for making new worlds out of old. Soviets and national guilds, the reform of the tariff and the resuscitation of the manor may or may not have their uses—that is a matter for enquiry—but they are not, and cannot be, panaceas. Society is too complex to be put right by any formula.

The only way of salvation is to reform the thought that gives birth to the institutions, to forsake the unreal for the real, the formula for the reality. To change the visible order is merely to regild or dye red the surface, but change the spirit and all the rest follows.

The first step, if we would regain that innocence of vision which is the prelude to all effective reform, is to make the great renunciation of our formulas and catchwords and try to see things not as our theories would have them, but as they might appear to a visitor from some other world to whom everything was a source of wondering interest and nothing a matter of course.

We can imagine the curious rubbish heap of discarded formulas to which we should contribute our own. There, prominently, would lie the slave state and the capitalist system along with the red peril and the national honour, a plant so deeply rooted in dishonour that it would have taken some pulling up. Thereon would have fallen, with a thud of extreme dulness, the white man's burden, and all around would lie decaying flowers of prestige.

Militarism and pacificism would repose side by side,

along with a multitude of other isms, imperialism, syndicalism, communism, conservatism, liberalism, feminism, and in huge and inchoate prominence socialism, all rotting together along with "fat" and labour. Partition would certainly lie there along with natural frontiers, not far from the skeletons of divine right and legitimacy.

There, too, would be the offensive remains of Anti-Semitism, and there, most certainly of all, obscurantism. And then, having each of us made his private contribution to the general litter, and assisted in shooting the whole collection to the devil, we might get on with the business of putting the world to rights.

Some things, obvious enough before but for that very reason little regarded, would now stand forth in startling simplicity. Mankind would appear for the first time not as a competition of principalities and powers, of classes and interests, but as the most daring of all adventures, the forlorn hope of life engaged in wresting from the universe its kindly fruits, so that in due time we may enjoy them.

It would be seen how that which binds us together is of infinitely more importance than that which separates us. War between class and class and nation and nation would appear as insane and wicked as a mutiny on board a sailing ship rounding Cape Horn in a gale.

It is only in appearance that nature is passive. She is, in fact, the keenest of opponents, who never fails to take advantage of a mistake, or of any slackening of energy on the part of her assailant, man. Life has

no choice between victory and annihilation. Civilisation has rendered this more the case than ever before, and we are less like an army defending its own territory than one which has penetrated deep into the heart of a hostile country, and has no retreat if once defeated.

Man's very efforts after improving his condition have rendered him capable of dispensing with his own improvements. He has so lavishly populated the world that only by all the resources of scientific production and distribution can he keep himself alive for a week together. If these should break down?

Russia affords sufficient warning of what even a partial breakdown entails, and Russia is less dependent on civilisation than a country like England, where most of the people live in towns and look for their daily bread to lands thousands of miles away, of whose names they may not even have heard.

Civilisation is not a thing that will run itself. Hour by hour men and women are working themselves, by the million, out of all that makes life worth living, in order that life may go on.

Immense stores of energy, accumulated æons ago, are being unlocked moment by moment for our benefit. But this energy is a strictly limited fund, the coalfields are in measurable distance of being exhausted, the world's oil is hardly good for our own lifetimes, and unless our brains are capable of discovering some fresh source of energy, mankind is rushing to a catastrophe similar to that which overtakes a man when the company, from which his in-

come is derived, ceases to pay dividends. And this is on the assumption that we can find some means of hanging together and not turning the resources of civilisation against each other and civilisation itself.

The first thing of all needful is to acquire this vision of mankind as a forlorn hope against nature, an adventure in an uncharted country, as something that demands a spirit of comradeship and co-operation if it is to have any chance of succeeding. Anything that tends to foster strife or hatred ought to be scouted as treason or, at best, as dangerous lunacy.

The spirit that delights in finding enemies and then in depicting them as more odious than they are ought to be known for the devilish thing it is. All that type of caricature in which the ingenuity of the artist is employed in depicting an opponent as contemptible and disgusting, all evil nicknames like "fat," "wastrel," "murder-gang," "paid agitator," "Hun," ought to be regarded as blows, not at an enemy, but at mankind and the light.

The spirit of artificial competition that regards every game as a fight and all life as a game ought to be kept within limits. If there is to be emulation of class or party, let it be in service and understanding, in love that thinketh no evil and to which my neighbour is as myself.

Then, having shed our formulas and harmonised our minds to an attitude of peace and goodwill, let us take stock of the civilisation of which we have blindly possessed ourselves. We shall then be in a

better position to realise what a pitiful waste and even destruction we have made of our resources.

Instead of having enough to go round, and leave something over for the realisation of a beautiful and noble life, we are in more imminent danger of reeling back into the beast than before we succeeded in multiplying our resources beyond the dreams of our forefathers. We have gone far enough in muddle and perversity to realise, by the bitter fruits of it, that the path we have chosen hitherto is definitely wrong, and that we have barely time to find and take the right one.

The first thing to do is to translate our newly-acquired goodwill into practical terms. Our powers have been cancelled or dissipated by being turned against each other, instead of to the common purpose of making the world better. It is time for us to get together and consider the matter from the standpoint of life against the universe, and not merely from that of life against life. It ought to be an axiom that men can never have too much power or knowledge provided that they use them rightly.

In what way, then, can we bend our energies so as to make the adventure of life a success? What does mankind want—how much bread, how many cakes and bottles of ale, what art and literature? And how are its united powers to be directed and disposed so as to attain these desirable results?

One question that will be faced and answered with a frankness inconceivable now is that which concerns the dirty work of mankind. Who is to do that which

is performed in India by the sweeper caste? Who is to go down into the black bowels of the earth to hew out the coal? Who is to perform the mechanical and unintelligent, but necessary tasks that keep civilisation alive? And above all, what type of mind must such a man have? If you have trained him to enjoy the delicacies and refinements of life, you may be rendering the task of poking about sewers an acute torture.

This is one of the dilemmas that is commonly evaded by those who label themselves democrats. But as things stand at present, there seems little choice between levelling down all to a common unrefinement, which appears to be the way of the Bolshevists, or of boldly, if reluctantly, violating the principle of equality and admitting, in ever so modified a form, the distinction between the sweeper and the Brahman.

However we think to solve this problem, it is one to be faced not in a passion, but with a seriousness proportionate to its difficulty. It will not be disposed of by passionately declaiming that it does not exist.

And this brings us to another aspect of our civilisation that is too much disregarded. Human welfare not only depends upon what we get and distribute, but also on how we get it. He who toils pleasantly for a little may be better off than he who wastes his life to provide himself with abundance of living. One of the most disastrous of our anarchic fallacies is that while the results of work are regarded, the work itself is treated as if it were a matter of indifference.

What is known as scientific business management

is often no better than scientific boredom and debasement of mind. That every task should be standardised and every man so disposed of as to do the same thing again and again with the rapidity of a machine is enough to make the modern mechanic cast back eyes of envy on the flint-worker of the stone age. And yet what is to be done, if the competition of other firms and other nations imposes an iron law of maximum production by any means?

The question propounded by Samuel Butler has yet to be answered—are mankind to be the masters or the slaves of their machines? As long as the men are incapable of uniting, the machines will control the situation. Left to themselves or to competition, they will impose conditions that will liken men as far as possible to themselves, except for the machine's blessed privilege of neither knowing nor feeling. Controlled wisely, they will take off man's hands just that work of unintelligence and drudgery whose necessity is among the greatest obstacles to his development.

In the ideal state of society the machines will have taken over the functions which the Greeks frankly assigned to the slaves, and which we, with less clearness of vision, have relegated to men with the legal status of free men and the social status of slaves.

But here we encounter another difficulty. The nation is too small a unit over which to make such a reform effective. The whole of mankind must fall into line, or the thing cannot be done. So long as one nation is out to undersell another, so long are

both of them driven to sacrifice everything to the necessity of producing cheap goods quickly, so long will the workman be treated to the reproaches of the equally overworked newspaper man, concerning the additional number of hours the German can work on an inferior diet, or the greater hustling powers of the Yankee.

Bill Nye may not have been an estimable character, and yet when he said that we are ruined by Chinese cheap labour he was not altogether wrong. It is a bedrock principle of constructive economics that men are brothers, and it is dangerous to make a brother's cheap living a stepping stone to cheap goods, even when that brother happens to be a defeated enemy.

There is another contributing factor to social welfare that must not be forgotten. There is a duty of enjoyment as well as of work. Cheap standardised goods are only produced because men are either not intelligent enough or well enough off to demand anything else.

The pride that makes a virtue of throwing back the gifts of God into His face is not only mistaken, but a deadly sin. He who denies himself the joy of having beautiful things is denying some craftsman the joy of making them. For there is a brotherhood in joy as well as in sorrow, and to deny it to oneself is to deny it to one's neighbour.

Indeed, in a perfect state of things, the vicious distinction between work and enjoyment would vanish away. Creative genius is the highest of human faculties, and its perpetual exercise the highest goal

of human endeavour. Were all men artists, not only would work be a perpetual delight, but the mere reception of it would involve the joy of creating it anew.

We have made no attempt to formulate a programme for the social reformer, or to give more than the barest hint of the difficulties and dangers that beset him. This is an age that cries out for a formula as an earlier generation for a sign. But before any sort of programme can avail there must come a change of spirit. Amid all the babel of conflicting policies and dogmas, the still, small voice of the truth is put to silence. But he who loves the truth and cleaves to her will surely find the way.

If once men were enabled to turn and see themselves as they really are, comrades and fellow soldiers in a struggle to which the greatest wars of history are but the bickerings of children, if they could realise how fatally they are even now wasting their opportunity, and how near their criminal blindness has brought them to the brink of ruin, they would turn with such earnestness and unanimity to the task of their own salvation that the details would soon become clear. It is, in the deepest sense of the word, religion for the lack of which we go blind.

CHAPTER XII

THE GOSPEL OF REALITY

THE task of putting our civilisation to rights thus resolves itself into one, primarily, of religion. As life is a perpetual struggle of the creature to adapt itself to reality, so is religion man's attempt to adapt himself to the ultimate and most comprehensive reality he is capable of conceiving.

The most primitive of savages, when he tries to propitiate his totem, is making some attempt to get into touch with a power that he feels vaguely to lie behind the things he sees. Some attempt there must be, however crude, to make the necessary reply of life to reality. The human mind can never be satisfied with an attitude of passive helplessness, the savage cannot admit his ignorance of what causes the rain or guides the year through its changes.

Like his ancestor the worm and his cousin the plant man's nature is to reply to any clear challenge from the outside world, and any reply is better than none. Hence, as his circle of interests widens, he makes the strangest attempts to adapt himself to the new conditions, his witch doctors make the rain, his priests sacrifice victims to bring back the sun, his maidens leap in the magic circle crying "Flax grow! Flax grow!"

Primitive man, by insisting upon having a reply of some kind to reality, was putting himself in an unfortunate dilemma. He was forced to assume a knowledge about what he knew and could know nothing to afford any reasonable basis for action. He could know nothing of the condensation of vapour or the working of gravitation, he could not get it out of his head that the forces of nature were persons, and therefore, in default of understanding the world around him, he had, for practical purposes, to create a dream world of his own, fashioned like all dreams in the image of his desires and fears. He then proceeded to act as if this world were real.

The girl who jumps to make the flax grow would probably be either hurt or angry if you explained to her that all the jumping in the world never made the least acceleration in the growth of any plant. The girl wants it to grow, she cannot bear to think that so important a matter is absolutely beyond her control.

In the same way a soldier, just about to go over the top, vows that if he comes through he will cease the use of a certain sacred word as an expletive. He cannot bear the thought of the German machine gun traversing impartially for the just and the unjust, somebody there must be whom he can bribe to deflect the course of the only bullet that matters by at least so much as to make the difference between a kill and a "blighty" one.

A great part of religion, or man's attempt to adapt himself to the ultimate reality, has therefore consisted

in nothing more than a faculty of dreaming awake. And as civilisation has advanced, so have the adherents of this kind of religion fought a desperate but losing battle for their diminishing empire of dreams and nightmares. First one province and then another has been torn from them, and only curious survivals remain to show how vast a claim was that of sheer make-believe to dominate the universe.

The Anglican rubric contains a couple of prayers for working the weather which take us back to the very atmosphere of the witch doctor and his rain-making. Not so long ago, reverend gentlemen were lashing themselves into transports of fury because a biologist had dared to make discoveries at variance with the Chaldean fairy-tale about the world having been made in a week. So had the inquisitors made an example of Galileo for blasphemously allowing the earth to take its impious course round the sun.

Now the only province over which the Empire of dreams disputes with science on anything like equal terms is that which concerns the survival or annihilation of man after death, a matter in which the passions are more deeply engaged than any other, and in which the facts of the case are most disputed and uncertain.

If this were the whole of religion, there would be no choice for the uncompromising seeker after the truth but to scout it altogether as an obsolete mode of thought. If it be true, as we have endeavoured to shew, that the whole of our present troubles are due to our habit of substituting our own dreams and symbols for reality, then religion, as the worst and most

impenitent offender in this respect, would be singled out for the most uncompromising attack. *"Ecrasez l'infame!"* would become the cry of every one who preferred light to darkness. "If this is religion," we might justly say, "then religion must go."

And indeed, in so far as religion partakes of this nature, it is obvious that no man can cleave to it and to reality at the same time. The situation of mankind is too critical for us to rest content with anything short of the truth. To accept a version of the facts because it comforts us, or because, in the words of a revivalist hymn, "it was good for our fathers and it's good enough for me," or, as is perhaps the most frequent cause of all, from sheer laziness and indifference, is a line of conduct more fit for an ostrich than a man.

In whatever high-sounding and mystical terms we may state the case, there can be no real doubt in the mind of any serious man that the clock of knowledge cannot be put back, and that where the priest sets his authority against the gradually accumulating knowledge of the scientist, the priest has got sooner or later to give up obstructing the thoroughfare.

It is time, in the highest interests of civilisation and religion itself to speak out boldly on this subject, and break any conspiracy of silence there may be to retain as many of the old fallacies as possible by a skilful juggling with words, or by ignoring the issues at stake. The assumption on which too many of us proceed is that we must at any cost retain the old dogmas and beliefs, even if we have to doctor their meaning to an indefinite extent.

God must be retained, whatever He or it may signify, because it would be too horrible to admit ourselves atheists. Christianity must be our faith, even if Christ be proved never to have existed at all, because we cannot bear the thought of being infidels. Our beautiful liturgy, our sacraments, our national church—these we must retain somehow. Life would be unbearable without its time-honoured consolations. "Without Thee I cannot live, without Thee I dare not die." So we come to make our highest aim the retention of our labels, when the boxes on which they are pasted have been long since emptied of their contents.

"Let God be true and every man a liar" are words only too expressive of our methods of thought. Even the most advanced free-thinkers have usually rounded off their systems by postulating some sort of God. Mr. Wells, who would drive all visible kings out of the universe, has taken to himself an invisible king, though, as some wag once suggested, his book would have been better rechristened, "God the Invincible Wells." Even Swinburne, having driven God with curses out of the universe, composed one of the most magnificent of all hymns to the goddess he set up in His stead.

And yet the Almighty Ruler of the Universe is demonstrably the last of a long series of dreams, and we can now trace His evolution out of the tribal god, the ancestral ghost and the totem. He is the final explanation of whatever cannot be explained, and in Him, as Prince Arjuna in the Hindu "Lord's Song"

visioned in the divine charioteer, are contained all the Gods and principalities and powers of primitive times and men.

It is obvious that to prove God's existence it would be necessary first to assume Him. The finite mind could have no criterion by which to judge of the infinite. To say that the universe must necessarily be constituted or governed on any lines whatever is to assume a knowledge of its workings such as only an infinite being could possess. And to fall back upon authority is only to shift the difficulty one stage further back. The question at once arises, what are the authority's credentials?

If the Bible tells you about God you have first to get God to guarantee the Bible. Besides, there is a diversity of authorities, and the adherents of any one of them seldom recognise the genuineness or even the harmlessness of the others. And the atheist is hardly to be refuted when he argues that the burden of proof rests upon those who want to introduce God into the Universe.

The official form of Christianity, which takes its stand upon the Gospels as historical documents, is ceasing to command the allegiance of educated men. Now that the full light of criticism has been turned upon them it is impossible to maintain that the weight of evidence is convincing enough to leave no room for reasonable doubt, even on such a fundamental tenet as the resurrection.

Nobody, even if he is so credulous as to base his hopes of immortality on one feat of successful magic,

is going to do so when it is an open chance that no such feat was ever performed. And when we come to examine the facts closer, we find it highly doubtful whether Christ made such claims for Himself as His worshippers allege, whether, in fact, He was Himself a Christian.

It is a curious instance of the way in which people ignore any fact that does not suit their convenience, that the text * is tacitly ignored in which He Himself claimed to be God only in the sense in which all men to whom the truth comes may, by the same mystical symbolism, be characterised as Gods. Students of comparative religion will note, with interest, the way in which the Buddha, another saviour and son of man, came to be vested with a posthumous and unauthorised deity.

Recent study of mental processes has thrown a penetrating light on much that was formerly accepted without question as pure spiritual emotion. Among less sophisticated peoples than ourselves, a large part of religion was frankly sexual, and it may be questioned whether we have succeeded in eliminating the Phallic reality merely by Bowdlerising our ritual. We are now beginning to understand something of what underlies the nauseating Jesu cult, so dear to revivalists, and why school girls of fourteen or so, and spinsters in the thirties are apt to be taken with such violent access of devotion to good works, ceremonial, and attractive vicars.

A desire for an invisible in default of a visible part-

* John X. 34-36.

ner is no doubt human, and, in its way, beautiful, but it is not what has hitherto been understood by Christianity, nor do we imagine any of our religious dignitaries caring frankly to proclaim himself as a leader and abettor of a cult possessing any sort of spiritual kinship to those of Astarte and Krishna. But to gloss over our real motives is to base our lives upon a lie.

The question must be faced, calmly and without prejudice, whether the bulk of what passes for religion to-day be not in need of scrapping. This is a question with which we cannot afford to trifle or temporise. It is hopeless to think of putting ourselves right with reality if, in dealing with the most fundamental reality of all, we cling to formulas long since obsolete, and think it wicked to follow the truth wherever it may lead.

That is the attitude not of religion, but of a criminal and frivolous indifference to any truth whatever. It is the attitude of the man who thinks that by mouthing "Lord, Lord," he shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. It is the attitude of the respectable folk who poisoned Socrates, and of the awful High Priest of God who dispensed with further witness, having heard such blasphemy as could only be expiated on the Cross.

It is not only in theory but in practice that our modern religion conspicuously fails. So manifestly is it out of touch with anything real, that people are ceasing to take it seriously. Everywhere the cry goes up of empty churches, and those who form the bulk of the congregations are, to say the least of it, not the

most highly intelligent of the parishioners. Even the old militant doubt is becoming tame with the want of anything serious to attack. The Hyde Park orator who foams at the mouth against Moses and Elijah is greeted not with horror, but with a faint smile at taking these worthies so seriously.

If you investigate the opinions of the average educated young man of the university class, you will find, with a few pious exceptions, that he is either bored with the whole subject of religion, or else that he is a more or less open unbeliever. And the failure of the various churches, during the late war, to take any decided line or to exercise any serious influence whatever is too notorious to call for comment.

The current and official religion is dying before our eyes from inanition, and it does not look as if the most devout efforts to galvanise it into life were destined to have much success.

And yet, if religion is the supreme effort of life to adjust itself to reality, if it be established that the vital need of our time is religious, some form of religion we must have or perish.

To abandon ourselves to the blind and godless materialism that has been our real creed for the past two centuries is to give up the final hope of saving mankind from the accomplishment of its own destruction. Again we are presented with that piteous spectacle of the burdened man in rags, breaking forth into his lamentable cry of "What shall I do?"

Perhaps it would be best after all if he were to turn his gaze, purged of the mists of dogma and conven-

tion, back to those very saviours whose teachings are so pitifully travestied to bring them into line with the world they would have reformed.

He would find a striking unanimity in their gospels as at the meeting, on the summit, of many paths that have wound up the different sides of a mountain. And he will see, if he has the patience to ascend by any one of them, suddenly bursting upon him like some noble landscape, a wholly different view of religion from any of which the creeds and churches have given him the faintest inkling.

The irrelevant curiosity that wants to be supplied with a peep behind the scenes of the cosmic drama, the cupidity which itches for a short cut to the knowledge and power over matter which it is man's business to acquire for himself, the vulgarity that seeks after a sign and the weakness that pleads for selfish consolation, with none of these is Christ or the Buddha or Lao Tse or the Krishna of the Bhagavad Gita concerned. Their news is of the attitude that a man should preserve in face of the universe, it is concerned with that Trinity in Unity, the way, the truth and the life.

The Kingdom of God, that is the gist of their message, is neither in the heaven above nor in the earth beneath, but within every man's consciousness, a state of the soul. "Thou art a man," as Blake divined with a flash of superb intuition, "God is no more!"

Of a God outside ourselves it is forever impossible that we should know, and it is a matter of indifference whether we choose to discard the very word, with

the Buddha, or, with Christ, use it of a spirit whose Kingdom is within us, and of which it can be said, by every true man, "I and my Father are one."

Whichever form of expression we choose to adopt makes little enough difference to the way of life with which alone religion is concerned. It is no business of the saviour to provide an up-to-date version of Zeus and Jehovah. To him God is a spirit, the spirit in which life ought to be lived.

As we have already found, this spirit, of which every gospel is the good tidings, is nothing more nor less than that of reality, reality which is petrified and distorted by human law and convention.

A divine elasticity of soul is the first requisite of salvation. To become as a little child with Christ, to know nothing with Socrates, to flee from illusion with the Buddha, or, with Blake, to cast off our filthy garments and clothe ourselves with imagination constitutes a duty that is older than mankind.

For indeed the very animals have stagnated or perished in their species when they have lost their power of adapting themselves to reality, when they have let some successful habit of past ages harden into a law and ceased to humble themselves to conformity with things as they are.

We can imagine some naturalist adapting the fable of the publican and the Pharisee to the huge brontosaurus, stiff with the pride of being lord of creation and the last word of life, and the humble ancestor of the mammals, conscious only of his own imperfection

and for that very reason better fitted to hand on the torch of life than the other.

For the conviction of sin, which has been conventionalised into a formal blackguarding of oneself in set terms on the understanding that every one else is an equally miserable sinner and that both the misery and the sin are to be taken with a pinch of salt, is rightly nothing but the recognition that to be satisfied with oneself is to stagnate.

What we are to-day is no guarantee for to-morrow, and unless we can contrive to be born again from moment to moment, or, as Paul expressed it, to die daily, we have indeed left undone the things that we ought to have done, and done the things that we ought not to have done, and there is no health in us. Our watch on reality is one that we can never afford to relax, and our reply must be not by formula, but by the spirit.

It is no wonder, considering how this message runs counter to all the indurated selfishness and sloth of mankind, that its reception should have been everywhere one of open or covert hostility. The mere vulgar reply of imprisonment or death has been less effective than the expedient of turning the gospel itself into a formula, and boldly honouring the evangelist as the champion of the very things he devoted his life to opposing.

When the Brahman conservatives found themselves too weak to cope with the Buddha by direct opposition, they adopted him into their hierarchy as the eleventh incarnation of Vishnu with an even better

grace than the Dukes accepted the leadership of Mr. Lloyd George.

That strangely modern Chinese sage, Lao Tse, who was as completely free from dogmas about God and gods five-hundred years before Christ as any agnostic, and who preached the doctrine of union with reality, or Tao, in its most direct form, was posthumously made the figurehead of a cult notorious for the childishness of its superstitious practices.

When the Scribes and Pharisees, who, under one name or another, form a pretty constant element of most nations, found that they could not kill Christ by crucifying Him, they were not long in discovering how from a dangerous enemy He might be transformed into a valuable asset to their order, simply by dressing up His image in the robes of Caiaphas, and using His name as a sanction for the very formula and convention He had spent Himself in opposing.

Once Caiaphanity could be nicknamed Christianity, the whip of small cords was robbed of its sting and the mount of Calvary of its victory. That nickname has stuck ever since its adoption, and so complete is the triumph of Caiaphas that any fresh attempt to challenge his law, to re-assert the message of his martyred Adversary and call upon the world to choose between Christ and Christianity, will no doubt be denounced as un-Christian blasphemy.

We make no attempt to set up Christ, or any other saviour as a fetish of infallibility. To postulate this of another it would be necessary to be infallible one-

self, and the rebuke is decisive, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good save God only."

By making gods of our teachers we fashion them, like all gods, in our own image, and cease to see or to hear them. By their fruits they shall be known, and we are to judge them by their conformity with the truth, and not the truth by its conformity with their life or teaching. The bedevilling of the poor pigs and the blasting of the fig-tree, if they ever occurred, are to be judged exactly as we should judge any other acts of cruelty or petulance.

In the recorded teachings, even of the greatest of the world's saviours, it is easy enough to find evidence that they were not entirely free from the very environment they sought to reform.

There is much that we have learnt of which they were ignorant. The whole nature of reality neither they nor any one has ever comprehended. But that they clave fast to reality, as they understood it, that they treated the law and the letter of their day as we too ought to treat the convention and dogma of ours, is their title to our honour and gratitude, and our warrant for repeating, "Go thou and do likewise!"

The knowledge we have acquired of the mind and its workings has enabled us to see the way of the spirit in a somewhat clearer perspective than was possible in past ages. For what the mystics call the way of perfection is, in truth, no more than the way of mental health. To increase in wisdom and in goodness ought to be as normal as it is to increase in stature.

Every life is, in fact, evolution in miniature. Life in particular, like life in general, is a continuous adaptation to reality, a reality which is perpetually enlarging its bounds as life advances to meet it. The reality of the infant is not that of the youth, nor the reality of the youth that of the grey-beard.

To the infant, as soon as it has become conscious of existing at all, nothing exists but itself. It is a perfect little egotist. Other people only exist for it and not for their own sakes at all. It is little conscious of the difference between things as they are and things as one would have them.

Those of us who can remember far enough back will be struck by the vividness and reality of dreams, which often constitute the earliest memories. Its senses tell the infant of its private wants, and it is glad or sorry according as these are satisfied. Gradually, however, the world of other lives begins to dawn on the growing child. The mere clinging to the parent for food or protection ripens into a love that may persist, often mischievously, throughout life.

Boy or girl friendships, as intense as ephemeral, come into being. And on these, in the ripeness of time, supervenes the great experience of love between the sexes, in which two become one flesh. Communal attachments are formed, the school expands into the country and the country, if the development is complete, into mankind.

The egotism and self-centredness which some philosophers have tried to depict as the very stuff of which human nature is made, is thus seen to be no

more than a passing phase of infantile development. To feel for oneself alone is not only wicked, it is babyish. It is as normal for the grown man or woman to feel for others as it is for the infant to feel for himself.

The criminal or the perfect egotist is the man who has contrived to grow up physically and yet to retain the mind of an infant. The reality of which he ought gradually to become conscious, and to which he should have adapted himself, has not come to exist for him. He is more to be pitied as a sick man than hated as a bad one.

The golden rule, to love my neighbour as myself, is thus no more than a first principle of health. But here arises, most pertinently, the old query—who is my neighbour? What warrant have I for assuming his existence at all, much less my obligation to love him? How if he be but a fiction of my imagination, like the people I have accepted, without question, in dream.

The answer, though simple, goes to the very root of religion. I am conscious of my neighbour in exactly the same way as I am conscious of myself, I have come to realise his existence as I first came to realise my own, my imagination apprises me of his joys and pains as my senses apprise me of my own, in short I love my neighbour because I am my neighbour.

And gradually, as I advance out of the unreal into the real, as the sun of knowledge breaks through the mists of illusion that surround me, I am reborn into

an existence far transcending that of individual me, my consciousness becomes that of life itself, my days its æons, and my hope in the coming of that time when life shall so far have attained the mastery that the universe has become as plastic as a day-dream and death is swallowed up in victory.

For this reason we say that the hope of saving the world lies in a quickening of religion. Mankind is in a state of arrested development. Like the criminal and egotist we have grown in physical power without expanding mentally, and so succeeded in realising the horror of a criminal and egotist civilisation.

We know the reality of our own appetites and interests, but are dead to the greater reality of life and its needs, life which includes not only our own race, but everything that has ever stood or shall stand in the great comradeship of organised response to force and matter. To the man in rags, crying "What shall I do?" the reply is now clear:

"Be born again without ceasing; seek and cleave to reality; advance in the spirit of life from strength to strength until you come to love your neighbour as yourself, and life more, until you are able to think and act for the whole of mankind, and thus to bear your part in saving the adventure of life from ruin."

It is so simple.a message that men despise it. They want their prophets to enjoin some great thing, to provide them with a dogma or a code of ethics or a Church or some new and interesting facts about God. They cannot believe that by merely turning earnestly, with all their mind and strength and soul to the truth,

that by realising how hopeless and fatal a thing it is to go on living in a lie, they are putting themselves upon a path that will open before them as they advance.

First attain the will to reality and you will no longer be tempted to gratify egotism or to lighten the work of your brain by throwing reality overboard. Be born again—the new life may be hard and difficult, but it will be life and not death.

EPILOGUE

WE should do wrong to close upon a note of gloom. Our time may be one of mortal peril, but it is none the less tinged with the promise of dawn. Signs are not lacking that mankind may yet be capable of thinking and acting in a manner worthy its headship of life. Even as we write comes the news of what may prove to be one of the greatest and most blessed events in human history, the reconciliation of the age-long feud between England and Ireland. Far away, beyond the ever-troubled Atlantic, statesmen have been making genuine and at least partially successful efforts to mitigate the insane competition in the means of death and destruction, and thus to avert the final tragedy of another war. In Europe there are signs that the spirit of hate and international anarchy is at last giving way to an impulse towards getting the nations together and making a united effort to realise the possibilities of life, not at each others' expense, but in a spirit of co-operation and brotherhood.

It is easy for cynicism to make light of these things, to have eyes only for the Gadarene madness of Prussian principles among the victors, for the insufficiency of the Washington palliatives, for the multitudes in England and Ireland who go on in their devil's work of peace-breaking and implacability, and seem to have borrowed from the revolting angels their motto of

"Ourselves alone." But, though Europe is sick almost to death, with her rocking exchanges and the kindly mechanism of civilisation out of gear, there are signs of that awakening to the truth which is alone needful to her recovery. Right and wrong were never so plainly matched against each other—on the one side indurated prejudice, hatred, greed; on the other truth, generosity, reason, love. But to make the right prevail there is no trust in any God or cosmic process, failing our own goodwill to create our world in the likeness of the Kingdom of God within us.

And this gives rise to a reflection similar to that of Milton, who thought that if God were purposing some great reformation, He would first of all reveal it, as His manner was, to His Englishmen. For, with all her crimes and hypocrisy, with all her sluggishness of imagination, this nation, and the commonwealth of nations into which she has expanded, has at least stood, with all that is best in her, for a more generous and enlightened ideal than mankind would otherwise have pursued. It is something to have conceived, however imperfectly, of an empire so godlike that its service is perfect freedom, to have begun to realise how much better it is to foster individuality than to destroy it, to confer liberty than to take it away. Tyranny in arms, the will to power and uniformity, is what we fought and overcame in the Great War, but we have to advance to a nobler conquest, the overcoming of these things not in their Prussian embodiment, but among ourselves and in our own bosoms.

What, amid all the vicissitudes of her history, has been England's saving quality, is a fitful but none the less persistent adaptability that has enabled her to discard the conventions and formulas of the past, and conform to the living reality of the present. When this has failed, England has failed too. She lost her American colonies because she was unable to conceive of an Empire different in principle from those of Rome and Spain, she has drifted to the gravest crisis in her history because she could not adapt herself to the changed conditions brought about by her own advance in mechanical power. But time and again she has saved herself by knowing the hour of her visitation, by her capacity for seeing things as they are, and doing what seemed wild and impossible to those who created their world in the likeness of their prejudices.

Thus it was that while the nations of the Continent were steeping themselves in the ideas and methods of old Rome, England was evolving a law and a system of government the like of which the world had never yet seen. No nation but England would have thrown away, with so superb a disregard of vulgar calculations, the fruits of her three years' war in South Africa and her centuries of domination over Ireland, no other nation would have rallied her Dominions to her side by cutting them free from all obligations but those of love towards the Motherland. And if anywhere she still hesitates to do the bold and generous thing, as when she hardens her heart, like Pharaoh, against Pharaoh's own people, we, who love her, may

at least hope in confidence that she will, ere long, cease this unnatural revolt against her own nature and spirit.

And is it too much to hope that she will now address herself to a harder task and a more splendid victory than any in the past? Mankind, weary and distracted from the results of its own suicidal madness, is calling for leadership. To whom, if not to England, should it be given to break from the fatal obsessions of past years, and to point the way from darkness to light? Has she not given birth to a brotherhood of nations co-operating with each other in love and liberty? Is not the lesson of her history, rightly understood, "Whatsoever I bound I lost, but whatsoever I loosed I gained"? She has applied it, as is her way, imperfectly and without full consciousness of its meaning, but is there any reason why the truth that has been apprehended in part should not now be known even as England is known to those who love her best, or why what has hitherto held good for one group of nations should not be extended to mankind itself?

For it is no formula nor system that England has to give, but the freedom of mind and body that is the indispensable preliminary of any attempt to see and act upon the truth. It is her power of adaptation to new and unprecedented situations that fits her to give the lead in the supreme attempt of life to face and deal with a wholly different order of reality from any of past experience. From whom, if not from her, shall we look for the high courage that flings aside the prudence of ages and the chivalry that casts, upon

the altar of an ideal, all that the world has hitherto counted for advantage? The divine madness that loves even your enemy as yourself, that triumphs in giving all away and bewails a victory with tears and lamentations, the spirit which the world has always greeted with the scorn of Pilate and the hatred of Caiaphas, that, and nothing else is needed if mankind is to live and not die. And if it should be England's fate to be stripped and crucified for the world's salvation, what more splendid destiny could any true patriot desire for her? Assuredly she will rise again and live forever.

Nor is it only to England, as a nation, that we would appeal. Surely, surely, there must be men and women who have realised how vitally the very existence of mankind is threatened by its divorce from reality. And upon these at least, however few and isolated they may be, it is incumbent to make an effort, the utmost that lies in their power, to cope with the peril. If only two or three, they must unite as friends and comrades, and take counsel how to persuade, to enlighten, to act. If they must be accounted mad that the world may become sane, if they must needs sacrifice themselves to the faith that is in them, that is too small a matter to be weighed in the balance. And if these words should chance to inspire one heart to translate them into such reality, they will not have been written in vain.

THE END