

THE
FALSE ASSUMPTIONS
OF "DEMOCRACY"

ANTHONY M. LUDOVICI

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BY

ANTHONY M. LUDOVICI

(AUTHOR OF "A DEFENCE OF ARISTOCRACY," "MAN'S
DESCENT FROM THE GODS," ETC., ETC.)

*With an INTRODUCTORY LETTER from
the Right Hon. Lord Willoughby de Broke.*

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
INTRODUCTORY LETTER FROM LORD WILLOUGHBY DE BROKE	vii.
PREFACE	ix.
INTRODUCTION THE CONFUSION OF LANGUAGE AND ITS RELATION TO REVO- LUTION	II
CHAPTER I. THE PRINCIPLE OF PRIVATE PROPERTY	27
CHAPTER II. JUSTICE	44
CHAPTER III. EQUALITY	61
CHAPTER IV. FREEDOM	77
CHAPTER V. SOCIALISM AND COM- MUNISM	95
CHAPTER VI. EDUCATION	126
CHAPTER VII. SOCIAL REFORM ..	153
CHAPTER VIII. THE PHYSIOLOGY OF SOCIAL UNREST ..	179
CHAPTER IX. THE GREAT ALTERNA- TIVE TO SOCIAL REFORM	199
INDEX	217

INTRODUCTORY LETTER FROM THE
RIGHT HON. LORD WILLOUGHBY DE
BROKE

12, *Wilton Crescent,*
London, S.W. 1.
May 1st, 1921.

DEAR MR. LUDOVICI,—

Thank you very much for letting me see the proofs of your book. It seems to me to be written at a very opportune moment, and to suggest a line of thought which could be followed with great advantage.

In these days of "propaganda," when our fine old language is being wrested every hour of the day in speeches, pamphlets and leaflets, to illustrate the views of political parties, it is more than ever important that we should have a clear understanding of the true meaning of words.

Nor is the vague use of phrases confined to the pioneer of political causes. Our very war memorials are utilised to inform us that the brave fellows whose honour they commemorate died for "freedom." If that were true, they indeed died in vain. Nothing can be further from even the most elementary conception of freedom than the present condition of society in these islands. But the pious and devout people who wrote those inscriptions are possibly not to blame.

Long before the war the nation had been so content to be governed by phrases that

we were actually asked to enlist for such phrases as "The rights of small nations," "Self-determination," and the like, whereas in very truth we were forced to fight to save our own skins.

Your suggestions open up so many considerations that I cannot explore them all. But your proposition that the quality of our institutions may, after all, be sounder than the quality of the men who have failed to work them, seems especially worthy of notice. If your book serves to direct attention to the wisdom of our ancestors, it will be a great benefit to the public.

Yours very truly,

WILLOUGHBY DE BROKE.

PREFACE.

THE Great War has left the world, and particularly poor old battered Europe, with many a high ideal shattered and many a respected principle destroyed. Not only the beliefs of our grandfathers, but also the convictions of our fathers, seem now old-fashioned and no longer seaworthy. Certainly an old era is dead; but has a new era been born? A new era suggests new ideals, new leading principles; it suggests a breastful of new and stout convictions. Have we of this dawning era any new ideals or principles? Have we any new and stout convictions?

It seems as if we had been plunged into this new world unclothed. True enough, millions have doffed their khaki; but the citizen clothing they have donned in exchange—is it all make-believe, all eye-wash? Are we really naked?

'At all events, before we can possibly tell where we are, or how we stand, the most necessary preliminary step would seem to be a general stock-taking of our ideals, principles and convictions—a re-definition of the big words that once led us, and of the great phrases with which we were once inspired. Only then, only when this re-definition shall have been accomplished, does it seem possible that we shall be able to

clothe ourselves in the ideology of our new and brightly illuminated age.

This book is a modest attempt at this spade work of re-definition. It does not pretend to be either exhaustive or expert. It takes up just a few of the old words and phrases, and by re-examining them in the new light, hopes rather to point the way than to cover the whole distance to the destination.

Alarming sounds fill the air. There are wars and rumours of wars wherever you turn. Indeed, there are rumours abroad and at home of the worst kind of war, the cruellest and most devastating kind of war—civil war. Can it be possible that a good deal of this threat of civil war arises from the very need which this book undertakes however imperfectly to supply? Can it be possible that revolution and even Bolshevism may arise out of this need for a re-definition of terms?

At all events, even if this need is only a small contributory cause, it is serious enough and cannot be lightly passed over. It is for fear lest this need may be something more serious than a small contributory cause, that the author has suggested the remedy of re-definition outlined both in precept and example in this book. If his pioneer effort, however limited in range, may lead others to produce more thorough examples of his method, he will consider that his pains have been more than adequately repaid.

ANTHONY M. LUDOVICI.

London, August, 1921.

THE FALSE ASSUMPTIONS OF "DEMOCRACY."

INTRODUCTION.

THE CONFUSION OF LANGUAGE AND ITS RELATION TO REVOLUTION.

"Babble, babble; our old England may go down in babble at last." Tennyson (*Locksley Hall—Sixty Years After*).

NOTHING on earth leads more certainly to disunion than a division of tongues. When it became necessary to disperse the iniquitous builders of the Tower of Babel, we know the expedient to which the Lord resorted, and how effective it proved to be. But whereas unity is a desirable condition, and a common tongue is one of the most potent means of realising it, people not infrequently forget that a common tongue presupposes a common uniform culture. It depends upon a common view of human life and the world. This common culture provides the frame, so to speak, to the design of life, in which every word of a language fits like a piece of mosaic. Remove the frame, disturb the arrangement, and the odd pieces of mosaic fall all about you and lose their significance and their necessary association. They can be used only as—missiles.

Whatever weight the usual arguments against the Middle Ages may possess, at least this is plain, that in mediæval times a common culture prevailed among the leading nations of Europe. Indeed, if we wished to sum up the effect of the Middle Ages in one sentence, we could not express ourselves more clearly than by saying, that in those days the leaders of men attempted to convert Europe into a single nation. This effort, though only partially successful, at least led to the magnificent result that most men, of what nation soever, understood one another—understood one another particularly in their use of abstract or general terms. For that is the test. In the end the names of things remain. The words representing common objects are usually as permanent as those objects themselves. Fashion may destroy the object and thus render the word obsolete; but for hundreds of years none will dispute the proper connotation of the word "chair," "table," "basket," for instance; while in the realm of abstract and general terms such severe fluctuations may have taken place as to make the same word mean something different to each generation.

Now the supreme importance of abstract or general terms lies in the fact that they are the words with which we guide our lives, mark out our goals and direct our effort. It is therefore urgently necessary that they should stand for very precise ideas, and that as the current coinage of speech they should mean the same things to all men of the same group, body, or nation.

As opposed to the effort of the Middle Ages, however, the effort of this Age, or the Muddle Age, seems to be directed towards turning every nation into a Europe—into a unit, that is to say, without unity. And this lack of unity is nowhere more acute and more apparent than in the realm of abstract or general terms. People of the same nation, nowadays, no longer speak the same language. They no longer mean the same things, or convey the same ideas, when they speak of Happiness, Beauty, Order, Right, Freedom, Liberty, Justice, etc. The frame has gone. The common culture has been replaced by a congeries of pseudo-cultures, all in active conflict. The consequence is that the all-important words of this class have fallen out of place in the design of life; they have no unifying whole in which they can find a stable position, they are at a loose end, so to speak, and they can be used not as intelligent missives, but only as missiles between isolated groups and parties that are doomed to eternal conflict.

A word at a loose end, however, is a word devoid of definite associations and therefore of meaning. Can a word devoid of meaning be used as a missile? Certainly it can, provided that it be given, despite its loss of an intellectual appeal, sufficient motive power to provoke an emotion. But of this anon.

There can be no doubt that we have reached a condition in modern Europe, in which each nation is, as it were, a complex of nations—a complex in which the majority of the most important words (the abstract

and general terms) not only mean different things to different groups and coteries, but also convey no precise meaning whatsoever to anybody. This, however, constitutes a state of complete confusion, and therefore a very grave danger. Just as one cannot help appearing stupid when one is trying and failing to understand a foreign tongue, one really is stupid when one cannot understand one's own tongue.

If stupidity seems to be increasing—and there surely cannot be much doubt concerning at least this form of "Progress,"—it is due chiefly to men's growing incapacity to understand their mother tongue. Abstract and general terms are no longer comprehensible even to the most literate; to the illiterate they are simply fireworks, flags or flagstones.

Now this would be all very well if it ended in stupidity. But that is not the final bourne of the present confusion of language. The final bourne is something much more serious, much more disastrous. It is revolution.

All those who may be tempted to regard this conclusion as extreme, would do well to pause a moment here, in order to dwell upon the possible consequences of a confusion of language.

Is it not clear that at all times and in all climes where a confusion of language has existed, man has been doomed not only to be misleading and misled, but also to be incapable of leading? That is the worst danger. A lack of precision amounting almost to incomprehensibility is sure in any case to mislead; but what if it makes it no longer possible to lead?

There will always be thousands of men prepared to mislead their fellows. Even in the heyday of every culture this has been so. Even with language at its brightest and best in precision and adequacy this is always so. But how about those who are prepared to lead their fellows, and who are admirably equipped for so doing? What are they to do if the only medium which lies to hand is so corrupt, so devoid of meaning, that they cannot use it without the tragic certainty of being misunderstood?

And yet who would undertake to stand up and speak to-day, even before an educated audience, without feeling certain beforehand that he would be misunderstood if he used the words Liberty, Freedom, Right, Democracy, Patriotism, etc.?

That is the danger. While there is a harvest prepared for those who would mislead in days like the present; for the rare individual who would lead, who is sufficiently gifted to lead, and whose leadership is needed, there can be but disappointment and barrenness.

This is the pass to which our present confusion of language has brought us. It makes revolution possible, because it makes the pursuit of false ideals inevitable, and conflict and misunderstanding a certainty.

The causes of our present condition are to be sought, first and chiefly, in the decline of a common and uniform culture, secondly in the cheap literature that has come into being since the Education Act of 1870, and thirdly in modern journalism.

In modern journalism the distortion and abuse of terms, the crippling of words has

become almost a habit. Catachresis, or the forcing and straining of words, is the rule; nowhere is the sacred duty of precision less observed than in the very quarter where its sway should be most uncontested. The journalist, intent only on sensation, is the first to debase words into missiles or empty symbols. He it is who sets the example to the crowd, by picking up these unfortunate fallen pieces of mosaic, in order to fling them about with the wantonness of a schoolboy. He it is who shakes the shoddy frame of modern culture in the hope of making even more of these sparkling fragments fall out of the design of life, until ultimately when some one does arise who would choose to construct rather than to destroy, he finds nothing to hand but shapeless and irreconisable monstrosities, chipped into mere stones by the mad fury with which they have been hurled about.

Matters would not be so bad if it were possible to point to one class, one stratum of society in England, in which language was treated with more respect. Unfortunately this is no longer possible. Even among speakers of good education this misuse of language is all too common. The present writer once heard the Bishop of London address a cultivated audience on the subject of Reconstruction, and was compelled to take exception at least a dozen times to that dignitary's illegitimate use of the word "Democracy."*

The reality of the danger, its imminence, will perhaps strike the most incredulous when it is pointed out to them that the

* He used the word in the sense of the "proletariat" or the "masses."

French Revolution itself was the outcome of a confusion of language; nor can there be any doubt that the Russian Revolution had a similar origin.

The French Revolution can be traced, and has been traced, even by writers quite friendly to "democracy," to the radical misunderstanding of three words—Nature, Freedom, and Man—by Jean Jacques Rousseau. This writer, as is well known, after having formed a totally fantastic and false concept of Nature, began to speculate upon the unhappy contrast that human civilisation presented in comparison with this fairylike figment of his mind. He compared man in the state of Nature—Rousseau's "Nature"—with civilised man in the 18th century, and then proceeded to show how impure, immoral and corrupt, was the second kind of man as compared with the former. The fact that the whole comparison was vitiated by the absurd impossibility of this so-called "thinker's" arbitrary definition of Nature, was only discovered scores of years later, when the untold damage to which his insane misunderstanding led, had long been past repair.

For the "Nature" of Rousseau was the Nature of our most successful Victorian poets—all smiling meadows, babbling brooks, nodding flowers and innocence. He had neither the profundity nor the honesty to see Nature as she really is—immoral, hard, merciless and tasteless.* Like our Victorian

* Perhaps Tennyson should be honourably excepted here (see *In Memoriam* LVI., line 15); but while the realistic estimate of Nature is certainly hinted at in the lines referred to, it could not be claimed that Tennyson consistently upheld this attitude.

poets when Rousseau gazed upon a rustic scene, he thought neither of the stoat in the hedge quietly devouring its field mouse, nor of the starling in the coppice solemnly and methodically hammering a snail to a pulp before swallowing it. He gave no thought either to the pitiless and eternal conflict of all the vegetation at his feet, or to the struggle probably going on in the adjoining village between a beautiful child and the microbe of tuberculosis. He dwelt only on that something which was not Man and proceeded to endow that something, which was not Man, with all the qualities that his feverish imagination regarded as desirable.

When, therefore, he proceeded to plant his "natural man" down in this utterly fanciful scenario of Rousseau-esque "Nature," he perforce drew a picture even more distorted of humanity than he had already drawn of Nature, and thus proceeded to his ultimate fatuous conclusion that "Man was born free and everywhere he is in chains."

Absurd and meaningless as this phrase was, it succeeded, as Lord Morley has pointed out, in thrilling the generation to which it was uttered in two continents; and it was not until a hundred years later that someone appeared who demonstrated that Rousseau was not only a liar but a pernicious liar. Meanwhile, Napoleon had proved to the French people, in deeds if not in words, how ludicrously fantastic were the ravings of this Genevan firebrand; but the philosophic demonstration of his radical misunderstanding of the three words, "Free-

dom," "Nature," and "Man," had to be left to a later generation.

The fact that the French Revolution was the outcome of this radical misunderstanding is now no longer contested by any serious thinker.

A searching and forcible re-definition of "Nature," "Freedom," and "Man," in the light of history, biology, psychology, and a sound outlook on life and humanity, if it had been rapidly prepared and widely circulated in Rousseau's lifetime, might have defeated the efforts of this Arch-charlatan to poison his own country and the world; but, in those days, who dreamt that the misunderstanding, or the deliberate misinterpretation, of three such simple words as Freedom, Nature and Man, could lead to so much horror and bloodshed?

The world at that time was only faintly aware of the far-reaching practical effect even of sound ideas; how could it justly estimate the consequences of false or unsound ideas?

Now, however, we know. There is no longer any excuse for us; our lesson is before us. And, alas! to-day, we are confronted not by the mere misunderstanding of three simple words, we are confronted by the very much more formidable fact that there is scarcely one general or abstract term in the whole of our language that has any definite meaning. We are confronted by the imminent menace of no longer having any language at all with which to appeal either to the reason or the unreason of man.

All the words by which our life, our

aspirations and our energy can be directed, have long ago become so meaningless, as the result of repeated falsification, mutilation and counterfeiting, that we may soon be reduced to the expedients of animals and savages, in order to make ourselves clear, and drown our voices in the clash of arms.

And yet it can be shown that these abstract and general terms, which no longer have any definite meaning, or which have acquired an utterly misleading meaning, do provoke emotions and feelings which are none the less harmful for being indefinite and vague.

How is this possible? If it is claimed that a word has ceased to make any intellectual or rational appeal, owing to repeated catachresis or misunderstanding, how can it still provoke dangerous feelings and emotions? If it fails, owing to the variety of ways in which it is understood, from meeting with uniform interpretation, how can it provoke uniform action?

A word may have ceased from making any intellectual appeal, and yet be forcibly associated by word-counterfeiters and other agitators with certain vague desiderata which defy analysis. For instance, suppose a certain adult A. repeat again and again to a child B. that one day, if it is obedient and amenable, it will be taken to "Chekko's." The child may press for a description of "Chekko's"; but all A. does is to nod his head, smile with prophetic good humour, and say: "Ah, you'll see. It's wonderful! It's magic!"

Here we have a case of a child to whom the word "Chekko's" means literally nothing. It is, however, associated vaguely

with something mysteriously desirable. "Chekko's" may have no real existence, but certain emotions are nevertheless susci-tated in the child by the sound of the word, because it has been led to believe that something dimly pleasant is associated with the name. Ultimately even a flag inscribed with the word "Chekko's" will make the child shout with joy; a signpost with the direction: "To Chekko's" will make it leap with excitement, and a mere passing reference to the "Checko-Slovaks" will lead it to suspect that these people must be a very pleasant and happy nation.

A correct definition of "Chekko's" given by someone whom the child trusts, would suffice either to dispel the emotion provoked by the sound, or else to confirm it, according to whether it had or had not a real existence, and that existence corresponded with the child's fostered mental image of it. But in any case the process of dissuasion would take time, and the re-definition would have to be inculcated upon the child as assiduously as the false and hazy original association had been.

It is possible, therefore, to provoke dynamic emotions by means of an absolutely meaning-less sound, even when the intellect of the listener receives no appeal whatsoever.

In view of this elementary fact in psycho-logy, the extreme danger of having a very large number of both meaningless and in-flammable words in our current speech will perhaps begin to be obvious.

The fact that the word "Freedom" has now become practically meaningless—even more meaningless than Rousseau made it,

because now it has not even a fictitious meaning—does not render it a whit less potent in provoking cheers and wild enthusiasm when it is shouted from the mystic eminence of a public platform.

Presumably when Rousseau spoke of "Freedom" he meant a certain lack of compulsion regarding actions which are peculiar to civilisation, a certain absence of constraint in regard to conventions that do not harass the savage. The savage does not require to wear clean linen, he does not require to wear a hat, he may if he choose eat with his fingers, or come to breakfast unshaven; he may have three or four wives, he may eat human flesh, he may live in the open and shoot down his prey without considering whether it belongs to the squire or to the lord of the manor. Rousseau cannot have meant anything but this by "Freedom." If Rousseau had been told that while it was true that the savage does not require to perform much that the civilised man has to perform, the civilised man, on the other hand, is "free" from many a duty that is incumbent on the savage, he would have perceived that to drop the constraints of civilisation for those of barbarism merely amounted to exchanging one form of bondage for another. For instance, the savage of certain climes has to tattoo his flesh, sometimes with great pain; he has to observe certain rigid taboos, he has to hunt for his food, he has to fight every day of his life against wild animals and the hostile tribe of his neighbourhood into the bargain; he has to work hard during boyhood and early

manhood to acquire efficiency in the arts of the chase and of war; he is obliged to recognise a chieftain, etc. In fact, it could be shown that Man in a "state of nature" is perhaps even more constrained by conventions and laws than civilised man. Only by deliberately falsifying the evidence—that is to say, by giving a thoroughly distorted notion of Nature, would it be possible to contend that man "in a state of nature" is more "free" than civilised man. Rousseau, as we have seen, however, did not hesitate to falsify the evidence. Hence he was able to say: "Man is born free and everywhere he is in chains."

But if we turn to the modern idea of Freedom, we shall find that it is even more difficult to understand than Rousseau's. For at least Rousseau's "Freedom" can be traced to a romantic distortion of the true attributes of "Nature"; the modern idea of "Freedom" can be traced to nothing.

In its two forms, the alleged desideratum of modernity, Freedom and Liberty, means literally nothing.

If we put the questions—freedom and liberty from what? and freedom and liberty for what?—it will be seen immediately that there is no definite idea whatsoever behind the words. Freedom or liberty as an aim, presupposes emancipation from a yoke. What is the yoke from which modern man wishes to be free? Is it work? Is it timed work?

Freedom or liberty as an aim presupposes emancipation from a yoke for a definite purpose. What is this purpose? Is it a higher or a lower? Is it more entertain-

ment or more usefulness? Is it desirable or undesirable?

To none of these questions is there any answer, because the modern words Freedom and Liberty connote nothing. And the same applies to such words as Equality, Right, Justice. These mere sounds have ceased to be words. But they all imply some mysterious desideratum which it may be worth while fighting for. They are missiles, fireworks, unmusical chords—anything! All they have retained of their original nature, is the power of directing energy. They no longer call up any definite or expressible idea.

Now when the most hortatory and inspiring words of a language have ceased to have any definite meaning, the nation using that language is in imminent danger of internal discord and rupture, and the beneficent influence of indolence and inertia alone can avert a catastrophe. The only question is, have we sufficient native indolence and inertia to tide over this crisis in our language?

Even if we have, the Continent has not, and ultimately by infection or contagion, our inertia and indolence, too, will be overcome.

What is the remedy? What is the corrective? What is the best means of resisting the influence of the Continent and of the corrosive elements at home without relying too confidently upon our negative qualities alone?

Strange as it may sound, the present writer suggests, as one of the most direct roads to a recovery of political and national

health, in the first place, that the disease of language should be cured. Everywhere, in the whole of the civilised world, disease of language is rampant. That country alone will resist and survive the revolutionary epidemic, which first cures its disease of language.

But how is this to be done ?

The grand method, the best method, would of course consist in re-creating a common and uniform culture, in which the spiritual words and phrases of the national language would find a new and definite place, a fresh and unmistakable association.

This, however, is perhaps a counsel of perfection. For where are the men to-day who would be prepared to embark on this gigantic undertaking, even if they were equipped for it? It is possible, and the material for its accomplishment lies close at hand. But where are the free spirits who have the courage, and who are capable of the solidarity, that would be required for such a task ?

The second best method, and the one more compatible with the power of our best men of to-day, would consist in rescuing the meaningless terms of our language—and there are thousands of them—from their pointless, unattached and almost disreputable existence. It would consist in re-defining them in the realistic light of history, biology and psychology, and in the light of a sane and sound outlook on humanity and the world. It would consist, further, in creating a convention as rigorous as the existing convention regarding all reference to sexual questions and organs, according to which

it would be regarded as an act of gross immorality and indecency to commit the sin of catachresis or abuse against any of the words thus re-defined, and it should be incumbent upon the ordinary citizen to report to the nearest police station any such breach of decency which he might happen to discover while reading his daily paper, or a novel, or any treatise printed after the promulgation of the law.

How many false ideals, false aspirations, and pernicious creeds and doctrines would then be dispersed? How many agitators, tub-thumpers, self-seeking bell-wethers, would then be put to flight! How many politicians would then starve! But how fresh and crisp the air of every debating chamber would then become!

This is a possible and highly practical method of dealing with our present situation. There is no excuse for its not being adopted. When once it had achieved all it could achieve, the masses should be made to benefit from the results of the undertaking. Indeed, it would be more or less futile if they were not made to benefit in this way. They would then become the alert and merciless critics of people who now sway them as easily as if they were corn in the wind; and seven-eighths of our present-day literature would cease from being published.

It is the surest, the speediest, and the most fruitful method of saving what still remains of Order and Culture. But it is a stupendous undertaking and one that will exact a heavy toll from all those who embark upon it.

CHAPTER I

THE PRINCIPLE OF PRIVATE PROPERTY

“ There is nothing wrong either in great wealth or in extensive property, provided that it be wisely administered.”—William Cobbett (*Rural Rides*).

BEHIND most of the modern hostility towards established and traditional institutions, it is not only a matter of mere caution, but also essentially scientific to suspect a certain amount of physical as well as psychical exhaustion. Modern mankind is tired, both bodily and spiritually. The pale fireless eyes of our urban adults alone ought to make us suspect the truth about this matter. Two thousand years of the increasing complication of Life, during which man's attention has had ever more and more detail to occupy it, together with a feeling of very genuine disillusionment on the part of the most enlightened regarding the highest ideals of the past; two thousand years, moreover, of progressive debilitation, during which the resisting powers of exuberant health have gradually and steadily been worn down—must have had their effect upon recent generations, and materially impaired their ability to face the institutions of their forefathers with their forefathers' spirit, health and understanding.

It cannot be repeated too often that it would be gravely unscientific, nay imprudent, to proceed to an examination of the modern hostility to traditional ideas and principles without taking into account

the attitude of mind, the tone of mind, and the degree of health, of those who represent this hostility. The fact that modern books on political questions usually take as their data the very conclusions to which this hostility has led, without previously determining the validity of the whole standpoint, or discovering the kind of minds that are responsible for it, need not deter us from departing from the customary method. Nor can our superior caution in this respect be fairly interpreted as bias.

It must surely be clear to most of us that, not only we ourselves, but all our contemporaries as well, are radically and incurably weary. Our physical resistance against disease is as seriously in peril as is our spiritual resistance against error, or against those ideals and desires that can appeal only to invalids.

Where life is ebbing, however, her most fundamental principles, her most inexorable demands, must be losing the force of their appeal. An ear is therefore lent ever more willingly and eagerly to doctrines and precepts which are non-vital, which already have about them the bitter effluvia of death; and it becomes ever more and more difficult to withstand the fascination of this new persuasiveness.

But because Man has reached a degree of lassitude that induces him to listen more patiently and submissively than of yore, to doctrines and precepts of decline and decay, it does not follow that these doctrines are irresistible either in their rational or emotional appeal. It does not even follow that their *rational* dressing is any more

above suspicion than they are themselves. The attempt intellectually to justify and bolster up a sickly tenet may be as unhealthy as that tenet itself.

It is suspicion, above all, that is needed wherever we turn in our modern storehouse of ideals and panaceas—suspicion coupled with the conviction that man is desperately weary in body and soul.

Now there is a state of weariness and apathy in which things that have become out of gear are no longer readjusted or repaired, but deliberately and ruthlessly destroyed. Each of us can picture in our mind's eye, the behaviour of the nervous invalid who, too exhausted to repair a persistently clanging bell, tears down the whole fitting, wires and all, so that the disturbing sound may cease for ever. Such an act is typical of exhaustion. It amounts to a deep-seated surrender of the power of repair. Brain and body tissues that are not themselves regularly repaired or recreated can hardly be expected to devise the means of repairing or recreating other things.

Thus we should expect the modern and exhausted mind to proceed in its corrective lust, not by means of readjustment, but by amputation, not by therapeutic art, but by extirpation. There are thousands of bells clanging discordantly in the house of civilisation to-day. The temptation of the modern man is therefore to tear them down, wires and all.

Whenever anything goes wrong—and things cannot always work smoothly in society, particularly in vast and complex communities like those of Western Europe—it is

natural for a certain large element in the population to proceed by means of suppression and amputation, by lopping off some creation of the past, and advancing the most convincing arguments for so doing.

If the Lords fail us, the simplest method is to do away with them. If individual enterprise falls short of its promise, a clamour is raised for its abolition. Family life goes wrong, married life goes wrong, and the remedy suggested is to make the dissolution of the marriage tie easier. It does not matter whether you are destroying a portion of your organism and therefore impoverishing yourself thereby, for you are simplifying your task, and this for an invalid is an achievement of maximum importance. Everything thus falls into a process of general disintegration, all troublesome appendages are sloughed off, and the body of civilisation is gradually truncated or dissolved. Meanwhile, however, since every step in this process of decomposition receives the most convincing intellectual support, no one suspects that there are other and better methods of setting to work. It never occurs to the typical modern mind that if institutions are to be abolished as fast as degenerate people show themselves unable to uphold them, then an immediate and far more speedy way of refuting and abolishing all civilisation would be to fill all its leading positions, and to invest all its institutions, with raw savages from the Cannibal Isles. Every institution and tradition would then break down, and presumably the modern mind would be satisfied that the only remedy

would consist in the abolition of all institutions and traditions.

Long ago the present writer pointed out that to set a buffoon on the throne is not to confute monarchy, and yet this is the principle we work upon in all our reforms. We never once question whether it may not be modern man himself who is wrong or decadent. This at least might lead us to look in the proper direction for improvement. We merely assail with savage fury every institution that modern man can no longer run to his and our own satisfaction.

Thus the instinctive and morbid indolence of sickness, to which amputation and suppression are naturally the most tempting corrective methods, becomes the standard of judgment for all ills; and where ignorant minds are added to sick minds, the natural bankruptcy of ignorance joins hands with the destructive lust of the sick, and the two together, hatchet in hand, set out to "reform" the world.

Can anyone doubt that this is indeed what we are witnessing on all sides? And does not the very specious seductiveness of the Socialist and Bolshevist propaganda lead us to suspect that here, at least, we are invalids listening to invalids?

The principle of Private Property is being assailed on all sides. It is now the fashion to talk glibly of the evanescence of private property, just as it is the fashion to be suffering from pyorrhœa or caries. Private property is another of the features of ancient societies which in this Muddle Age has got out of order; and the consequence is, as we should expect, that it is beginning

to be suggested—nay, it has already been loudly proclaimed—that private property, as the root of all evils, should be abolished.

Now in this new project of vandalism, we have not only one symptom of disease, but two. For, while we have our old friend, the morbid indolence of the sick, which cannot recreate or repair, but must suppress, we also have a frontal attack on Life itself, pressed by the forces of decay and disintegration disguised as Utopians. For private property is a principle of Life.

The fact that this is everywhere apparent, does not, of course, prevent the myopic from overlooking it; it should, however, prevent the multitude from being deceived, and we believe the multitude are still not deceived. For it is obviously the multitude, the vast mass of mankind, who have the least of this world's goods, who should be the first to be duped about this matter; and yet how long it is taking to convince them! How tenacious they seem of the old principle! How deeply must they believe in private property in order, with their handful of household sticks and baubles, to resist the morbid lie which is being reiterated by a thousand moribund voices all round them, that private property is wrong.

It has been said that private property is a principle of Life. What, then, is its biological value?

Its biological value is the same as the biological value of the best life itself.

To be quite plain, Life as a whole does not represent a general movement upwards, from the standpoint of quality. On the contrary. The great majority of Life's ac-

tivities have a gravitating or descending tendency—that is to say, in a large number of organisms, acquired embellishments or acquired faculties and qualities more frequently have to be dropped than retained in the course of generations. Spencer has shown conclusively that by far the greater number of existing organisms are the degenerate descendants of higher species (see *Collected Essays*, Vol. I., p. 379). The laws of evolution, therefore, cover millions of cases of *retrograde metamorphosis*, or change consisting of the loss of complex qualities or members for the purpose of survival. And in all these cases of retrograde metamorphosis, instead of the identity of the individual becoming extended, it is actually diminished or reduced.

Development is, therefore, really the exception rather than the rule. It covers only those cases in which a cumulative or forward metamorphosis has taken place. It is characteristic only of those species in which identity has been extended. Indeed, development might be called the law of higher life, or of that life which advances by gradual steps from the homogeneous to the heterogenous, which, in fact, *unfolds itself* only to reveal and to perpetuate ever fresh and new attributes and activities.

Development is a name which, though not descriptive of all organic evolution,*

* An enormous amount of confusion has been caused by the loose application of the term "Development," to all processes of change in life. Strictly speaking, development means unfolding. But the process by which the tape-worm has degenerated from the higher species to which it once belonged is not a process of unfolding or development, but one of loss and reduction, one of gradual truncation and limitation. c

certainly describes the changes of a species *that has grown* through its thousands of generations—grown, that is to say, in the sense of having become more and more—more and more capable of multifarious activities and adaptations.

Development in this correct and restricted sense of "growth," thus implies "becoming more," "extending identity." Becoming more, therefore, is a principle of higher life.

Now what does this conclusion necessarily involve in the terms of humanity? It means that the *ascending* line of life in the genus *Homo Sapiens*, at least, has not only become more and more, but must also have been characterised by the spiritual counterpart of this physical striving, which consists in desiring to become more and more—that is to say, to extend identity.

Any slackening, any reversal, any paralysis of this desire to become more and more, may thus be regarded as the beginning of the other movement—the movement of retrograde development, of decline.

In each healthy individual of a truly *developing* species, we should therefore expect to find the *conscious* counterpart of the principle of higher life, which will be the desire to become more and more, to extend identity.

To assail this desire to become more and more is therefore tantamount to a conspiracy against life, it is tantamount to a denial of the healthiest instinct of the species. It is the hand of death outstretched across the *ascending road* of the animal man.

Call this adverse criticism or hostility

what you will—Socialism, Communism, or Bolshevism, it is all one. It is the cry of those who have lost ascending or developing life's strongest instinct against those who still possess it. Or else it is the cry of the envious in life's battle, who pretend to have lost life's strongest instinct, in order to acquire power over those who have not.

I shall hardly be called upon to draw the obvious conclusion. How does, how can, the individual of a species that falls naturally under the head of Development manifest this incessant striving to become more, which is the conscious counterpart of the physical evolution of the race, except by means of private property? How can he achieve this becoming more which, as we have seen, constitutes an extension of his identity, without private property? I do not refer here to those exceptional individuals who are content with a non-material expression of this "becoming more," but to the mass of mankind, in which individual extension *must* take a material form. Private property is the only means, and this private property is so closely identified with individual extension that, as we know, in certain Ages and climes, wives and children have been included in the category.

It constitutes the gratification, nay the very necessity, of one of the deepest instincts of man. It is indistinguishable, inseparable, from the law of growth; hence the obstinate attachment even the poorest still reveal in regard to it; hence the uphill work which the preachers of Death and Decay, still find their propaganda to be.

The very morality of development says

"Yea" to this desire to be and to become more. The very morality of development identifies growth, in the individual sense, with the general growth of the species, and therefore sanctifies and hallows the instinct of self-extension which is the instinct of private property. Only the sincere and whole-hearted pessimist can logically assail the principle of private property, for he alone can honestly desire to cripple his fellows, paralyse their life instinct, and curtail their existence on the globe.

It is hardly necessary here to refer to the dawn of the sense of private property in the lower animals. This has been done often enough. Suffice it to point out, however, that in them also it is most apparent where the variety of activities and adaptations is most complex—among the bees, the ants, the dogs and the cats. True, the private property in question is only food, or matter which will one day be used as food. But is this not true of all property? Has not the revolution in Russia shown that all property is merely so much frozen food, so much wealth that can ultimately be bartered for nourishment? And does not this again point to its deep relationship to the highest law of growth?

The important outcome of this inquiry into the ultimate relation of private property to biology and to the highest laws of life, however, is that it enables one to recognise the Socialist, the Bolshevik, and the Communist (where they are most sincere and fervent) in their true guise—that is to say, as the convinced and determined opponents, not only of a particular class, but of Life

itself; as pessimists and bitter misanthropists, who do not scruple to conceal their hostility to an important life-principle beneath the most engaging and most unctuous of altruistic poses.

But then is all well with the principle of private property to-day? And are the Socialists, Bolsheviks and Communists all wrong?

All is certainly not well with the principle of private property as it is allowed to work in our societies at the present day. Hence the colourable warrant that is given to the attacks of the Socialists and Communists upon it. Hence, too, the plausibility of their claims. For it is the simplest of feats to confuse an issue, and in societies where the right of private property is abused, it is easy to convince the thoughtless that the thing abused, and not the abuse itself, is the real curse.

It is, therefore, readily admitted that there is a good deal that is wrong about private property as a principle practised by modern man; the wrong, however, is no more inherent in the principle itself, than cruelty to children, because it happens to occupy the attention of a large and wealthy society in England, is inherent in the principle of parenthood. And it is because the present evils of the distribution of wealth are not inherent in the principle of private property, that it is ridiculous—not only ridiculous, but also highly suspicious—to wish to sweep away the institution itself in order to remedy the evils that now unquestionably account for its disrepute.

It has been shown why this desire to

sweep away the institution is doubly suspicious :—

(a) Because it is the natural resort of sick and exhausted people, who are incapable of repairing or recreating anything.

(b) Because it is the action of people who are hostile not merely to private property, but to Life in general. (The fact that they are usually completely unconscious of this hostility only renders them all the more dangerous.)

The recognition of the right of private property is probably the oldest of all human principles. It is seen in all great civilisations. Every great culture has been built upon it. All societies, however, have not created the evils of modern Western civilisation. This alone ought to have provided a hint in the right direction. It ought to have been seen that the evils attending the distribution of wealth to-day, are evils more or less peculiar to the kind of culture we have evolved.

What are these evils ?

(1) The chief evil of all is that by our present method of wealth distribution, the best people are not infrequently the most sorely oppressed, the most severely chastised by poverty and lack of power. The correlative evil to this is that those who are powerful to-day through wealth, are frequently so hopelessly unfitted to hold their position that the system which elevates such people to their present eminence seems as if it must be bad to the root.

(2) The next in importance is that life at present is organised in such wise that poverty does not mean merely humbleness

of station ; for which of us would object to that? It means being compelled to perform some of the most heart-rending, most unhealthy, most besotting and characterless work that the economy of the community has to offer. Society should be organised in such a way that either filthy and besotting labours should not be necessary or else that where they are necessary, they should entail compensating advantages.

(3) The next in importance is that, as society is organised at present, poverty, which might be readily and cheerfully accepted by thousands of us, aye, actually preferred in some cases—now almost necessarily signifies bad air, ugly surroundings, poor food, and consequently an unsecured bill of health. Accessibility to conditions in which good air and beauty are, as it were, happily wedded, is becoming ever more and more the restricted privilege of the wealthy.

(4) Owing to a misunderstanding of the true nature of social unity, wealth, or extensive private property, now gives certain classes the power of trespassing upon the life-needs of their fellows, without, however, being amenable to law—cornering markets, levying undue profits, destroying beautiful sites, supporting a host of societies which are simply parasitic pests on the nation's back, unwise disposal of fortunes, etc.

(5) Owing to the educational advantages associated with wealth—an association which is quite unessential and arbitrary—modern society imposes a certain measure of benightedness and ignorance as an inevitable inheritance upon poverty, which is not in the least essential to poverty *per se*.

After this brief enumeration of some of the leading evils of our present system of wealth distribution, is it not, however, more than ever clear that none of these evils is inherent in the principle of private property itself? Who would venture to prove that any one of the wrongs enumerated was (a) either inherent in the principle of private property, or (b) irremediable without the sacrifice of that principle?

If we consider the first and chief wrong which consists in the fact that private property at the present day frequently elevates to power people who are totally unfitted to wield any power at all, while it as frequently condemns to impotence, obscurity and ignominy, people who would be eminently fitted to wield power, we realise at once that the fault does not lie in the amount of property held by these people, but upon the significance which current opinion and the prevailing estimate of wealth attaches to the accident of great or small possessions in either case.

It is well known, everybody indeed has heard of it, that in certain cultures that have existed and still exist, the significance of great possessions has not been the same as that which Western civilisation has chosen to attach to them. The Brahmin of India, for instance, although he is doomed to poverty in the most literal sense, is the most highly respected among rich and poor alike. He rules and directs opinion, neither because he is rich, nor because he is poor, but because he is profoundly wise, and because power does not happen to be connected, in the enlightened Hindu mind,

with great possessions. It can be shown, and has been shown often enough, that the famous mendicant monks of the Middle Ages did not increase their power, but actually forfeited it, when they acquired riches and became as the other holy orders.

Evidently, then, the equation $\text{Wealth} = \text{Importance} = \text{Power}$, is not an inevitable one. It does not depend upon mathematical necessity. It is a perfectly arbitrary association of ideas, which is the result of a singular and quite gratuitous valuation.

The fact that it is deeply seated in the prejudices and prepossessions of all Western peoples, appears to give it the sanction almost of a social law. It would, however, constitute the acme of imprudence and superficiality to allow oneself to be led by this apparent unanimity into the belief that it either denotes or implies an ordinance of Fate.

The unanimity with which reverence is now felt for wealth alone, is only one of the many instances which it would be possible to give, of the stubborn and determined manner in which an arbitrary valuation strikes root in the heart of whole nations, when once it has been systematically and painstakingly inculcated upon them. It is one of those cases which inspire with hope all those who may be confronted with the apparently thankless task of altering the prejudices and prepossessions of a people. For, if it has been possible erroneously to raise wealth to the highest among our valuations, without a trace of social law to help us, it is clear that it must be possible to alter that valuation, to "transvalue" it,

as the technical phrase has it, and to bring mankind back to a more rational understanding of the proper equipment of power, which consists chiefly of wisdom, virtue, character and resolution.

Nobody denies, of course, that when once wisdom, virtue, character and resolution, happen to combine in the same individual, the addition of wealth may make that individual exceptionally precious; but wealth, as we frequently see it to-day, endowing with power people who are neither wise, virtuous, characterful nor resolute, is little less than a national curse.

For what does wealth mean? It means simply that the owner of it has a purchasing power over the services of his fellows. It by no means signifies that this purchasing power will of necessity be wisely, virtuously or profitably exercised. Wherever it is not wisely, virtuously and profitably exercised, therefore, it becomes a scourge. The power itself becomes *violence*; and it is incumbent upon the laws of all well-regulated communities to suppress at least man-made violence. The besetting vice of all Western societies, whether Monarchies, Aristocracies, Republics, or "Democracies," has been and is still that they have never taken adequate steps to suppress this particular kind of violence.

But the remedy for such violence would not consist in abolishing the principle of private property. You might just as well abolish knives because they are frequently used by homicidal maniacs. The remedy consists in so modifying the life of the nation, and the prejudices and prepossessions of the

nation, that wealth may not necessarily mean power, and that poverty may not necessarily mean ignominy, ignorance and ill-health* ; also that it should be difficult for material success to be achieved by people who are frequently the most contemptible members of the community both in spiritual and physical gifts.

All those who question the possibility of such an achievement in the recasting of values, are invited to dwell upon the genesis and growth of the prevalent ruling equation, $Wealth = Importance = Power$. They are invited, furthermore, to discover the moment in history when another valuation showed signs of becoming prevalent, and to ascertain by what means, foul or otherwise, it was made to fail. Then only, in the light of what they found, will they be able to decide whether a new equation and a new valuation have not even now a chance of being initiated, accepted, and universally believed.

* It should be remembered, however, that in a society in which success really did depend upon the possession of the highest moral and bodily qualities that the community could display,—which is by no means the case at present,—poverty or failure would undoubtedly have a certain inexpungeable stigma upon it ; and quite rightly too. That which removes the stigma from poverty or failure to-day, in the eyes of the enlightened, is the fact that riches and success are frequently achieved by people who could not possibly lay claim to any high moral and bodily qualities,—not to mention the highest.

CHAPTER II

JUSTICE

“ Si nos coeurs battent, c'est dans ce but . . . c'est pour que nous puissions compter sur l'avenir et savoir s'il y a dans les choses d'ici bas une justice immanente qui vient à son jour et à son heure*.”—L. GAMBETTA (Cherbourg speech. August 9th, 1880).

A DISCUSSION of the idea of justice almost necessarily precedes the subject of the next chapter, for the kind of justice which is the object of public clamour outside the law and police-courts, and beyond the dealings of man with man, provides one of the principal arguments to those who believe in human equality.

In this essay, then, it is clear that we shall not be concerned either with the justice which includes the administration of the law, and the incidence of the law of any country, or with the justice which relates to the unwritten rules of conduct governing the commerce of men and women; but rather with that idea of equity which, while it enjoys a fast hold upon the imagination of all Western peoples, is supposed to have an existence apart from statutes, codes, regulations and by-laws, and human con-

* “ If our hearts beat, it is with this object . . . it is in order that we may rely on the future and know whether there is an all-pervading justice in the things of this world, which ultimately has its day and comes to light at its appointed time.”

ventions. It is an abstraction, somewhat like the idea of equality; but it is not a mathematician's abstraction, it is the abstraction of a moralist. It arises out of the idea of a moral order—that is to say, of a supposed universal tendency to arrive at a perfect equilibrium between deserts and rewards, and it assumes that the moment this perfect balance is disturbed, a violation of this abstract justice—Gambetta's "*justice immanente*,"—is supposed to have occurred.

To take an instance which illustrates this notion of justice, it is popularly supposed that for a child, who can have committed no crime sufficiently great to deserve severe punishment, to be born in a sordid home, in a still more sordid city-quarter, of drunken parents, some disturbance of the balance of justice must have occurred—a disturbance which, if it is to be corrected, must require some kind of compensation. If the compensation cannot be conceived as forthcoming in this life, another life is postulated, in which the proper equilibrium between deserts and rewards; will be restored. It is not enough to say that the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation. Although the ancient Jewish view of universal justice doubtless required some such explanation, and found it satisfactory, the modern view of "immanent justice" is not satisfied by this method of settling the question. Indeed, the very idea that children should expiate their parents' sins is abhorrent to the modern mind, steeped as it is in this notion of justice. It only consents to it as a fact in the face of over-

whelming physiological and biological evidence, and, even then, takes refuge from the apparent harshness of the law, in the settled conviction that somewhere, some-when, compensation will be provided for the expiatory suffering.

It is the suffering that can be traced to no particular *transgression* on the part of the individual, that chiefly outrages the modern man; that is why it seems fair to conclude that this notion of immanent justice has a moral foundation.*

As a matter of fact, there is nothing more unjust than this notion of justice, but its injustice is by no means obvious.

There is no outcry when a murderer is hanged, although psychology, heredity and even sociology, may be called to witness that his act was as inevitable as is the crippledom of the child born of tainted blood. There is no outcry when a vicious reprobate dies in poverty and pain. There is no outcry when an habitual criminal ends his days on the treadmill. Morality here receives its tribute. Chemistry, physiology, biology, and the laws of heredity

* The present writer has even heard women declare that the lot of the female human being, with all its disabilities and physical burdens, constitutes an "unjust" apportionment of pain and pleasure when compared with the lot of the male. It is difficult to discover what injustice is meant here, unless we conclude that women who speak in this way have acquired from their stupid men-folk ideas about a certain justice behind phenomena or in Nature, which in their particular existence appears to be transgressed. In any case we are quite safe in assuming that it cannot be an infringement of man's justice that is meant here. It must, therefore, be the imaginary justice which is the subject of this essay, and which moral people read into the universe.

that, derive from them are superseded by the moral bias, and there appears to be no violation of that "immanent" justice when one of Nature's born ne'er-do-wells comes to a sad end in a prison quadrangle.

In cases of suffering which are less easily traced to an apparently deliberate transgression of moral laws, however, a miscarriage of universal justice is supposed to have occurred, and the sympathy of all, and even the indignation of some, are immediately aroused.

It is true that attempts have been made to withhold even this sympathy, as in the case of the second commandment already referred to above; but the best instance is that of David's famous observation in the 37th Psalm: "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread." This, however, is so obviously a desperate endeavour to square a moral reading of the universe, or the conception of an eternal justice behind all phenomena, with the spectacle of misery and indigence, that its transparency offends the dullest vision. It is not unlike the attitude of some Eugenists who would argue that the poorly remunerated of to-day should be prevented from multiplying because they are not only the *unfit*, but the *undesirable*. To call them unfit is biologically correct; for it merely amounts to saying that they are unadapted to their environment. The idea of undesirability is, however, smuggled in gratuitously, only in order to try to account for what would otherwise appear an injustice. If the poor be made to appear as lying under a stigma,

the difficulty presented by the apparent injustice of their position is easily removed.*

In the same way the necessity of condoling with an invalid is unconsciously resented by most of us when we endeavour, particularly to the invalid's face, to ascribe his or her trouble to some glaring imprudence or violation of rational living, through which we infer that the illness or indisposition has been brought about. We thus reduce it to a pain or penalty that the sufferer has *deserved*, and in this way we release our minds from the constant preoccupation concerning justice and injustice.

Women, who are very much less social in their instincts, and, therefore, much harder than men, repeatedly behave in this way, even with their own children; and before they make a movement to relieve suffering, their lips will have pronounced innumerable reasons why the particular indisposition or pain confronting them is the sufferer's own fault.

Why did David say that he had never seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread? Why do certain Eugenists try their hardest to attach some stigma to poverty, or to what they call the poorly remunerated? And why do people suddenly heap all kinds of blame upon the head of an unfortunate man, woman or child, who has suddenly contracted an illness?

It is suggested that the reason is because the acceptance of the view that there is a

* It would only be correct to say that the poor are the *undesirable* as well as being the *biologically unfit*, if successful adaptation to modern conditions demanded the highest virtues and abilities of which the community is capable.

moral order to the universe, implies two conditions: (*a*) That nothing occurs that is not just; (*b*) that, therefore, there is no suffering that is not in some way retribution or penalty.

When confronted with any form of suffering, therefore, the first impulse of everybody trained in this school of thought is an attempt, at once, to square the particular example of unhappiness before them with this notion of universal justice; and if it will not square, without supposing some ultimate compensation that will balance it, or some pain or crime that is sufficient to account for it, some such ultimate compensation or some such transgression is quickly imagined, which seems to satisfy the requirements of "immanent justice."

If it is quite impossible to discover a sin or a crime in the individual that will account for the individual's suffering—as, for instance, when a child is born of diseased or drunken parents—when, moreover, doubts are beginning to be felt, as they are to-day, in a large number of minds, regarding the possibility of compensation in another world for undeserved miseries in this world—then a gross injustice is supposed to have occurred, and everybody who looks at the universe through moral glasses, feels acutely uncomfortable.

"Why should Tommy Jones," they say, "be born of diseased or drunken parents, when Thomas Vere de Vere was born of healthy or sober parents! It is unjust!"

They are indignant, and they look indignant, and those among them who cannot believe in an after-life in which this appa-

rently monstrous miscarriage of "immanent justice" will be rectified, become social reformers who are prepared to fight, and lead others to fight for—justice!

Those people, on the other hand, who are persuaded that their religion can explain anything, and who enjoy the most determined optimism where the suffering of others is concerned, have yet another loophole of escape from the disagreeable certainty that a miscarriage of universal justice has occurred. Nodding their heads gravely and wisely, they say: "Who can tell? Providence moveth in mysterious ways. May not these sufferers be the most sorely tried because they are the most loved? For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth."*

Everything is done, every expedient is tried in order to escape from the maddening certainty that suffering is possible without a sin or a crime having been committed. When finally it is discovered that such things as pain and misery do co-exist with innocence, or at least with a lack of guilt, then the feeling arises that an injustice has been perpetrated which must at all costs be corrected. And since eternal, or universal, or immanent justice cannot be held responsible, man himself and his civilisation are frequently accused of having been guilty of an injustice of which neither is in any way capable.

What is it that has forced this conviction upon mankind? Failing the comforting assurances of religion, which postulates a heaven in which the uneven balance of pain and

* Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews. Chapter xii. 6.

pleasure is adjusted, and a deity who chastens those whom he most loves, why is it that at the sight of unearned misery and pain the average man has a feeling of revolt, as if a primary law of the universe had been wantonly outraged ?

I have suggested that the average man reads morality into phenomena, that he imagines that the world is a moral world, and that consequently pain and pleasure alike must have a moral explanation or cause. It is this that creates the idea of an "immanent" justice.

But, if we contemplate the world as a whole, what justification have we for postulating a moral order of phenomena ? Why should we expect something so essentially peculiar to human society to pervade the design of things in general ?

As a matter of fact, from the standpoint of civilised human society, Nature is utterly immoral, Life is hopelessly unjust. It is not only the sinful young rabbit that provides the fox with his meal. It is not only the guilty mouse that dies an agonising death in the cat's jaws. It is not only the dissipated sparrow that is torn to fragments by the young of the sparrow-hawk. Neither is it only the vicious worm that gets rationed out piecemeal to the young of the mole. And what of the antelopes that fall victims to lions and tigers, the sheep and cattle that fall victims to man, the pheasants that fall victims to our sportsmen, the fish that fall victims to their larger fellows ? Wherever we look, we see suffering—undeserved suffering—aye, undeserved agony. The world and Life are therefore essentially unmoral, they

are not concerned with justice. The rain falls both on the just and on the unjust. The hurricane kills the just and the unjust alike. The lightning burns the house of the just or unjust indifferently. Microbes feed on the pure and undefiled virgin just as ravenously as upon the polluted jade. Tuberculosis does not pick and choose; it kills where it can. Virtue is no safeguard against it, neither is genius.

Wherever we look, either in the jungle or the prairie, we see the blood-red fangs and the carmine claws of the bully rampant! Fair play? Where is the fair play between the cat and the mouse? Where is the fair play between the stoat and the shrew? Where is the fair play between the wolf and the lamb? Justice? What is justice, where is justice in Life and Nature? In the vegetable world, which is said to be inanimate, the fierce uneven struggle is not even mitigated by the "sporting chance" of escape.

Truth to tell, the word justice—whether immanent or otherwise—is meaningless when applied to the universe. Nobody has ever dreamed of thinking out the billions and billions of post-mortem compensations which would be necessary to adjust the balance of only one year's rapine and slaughter in the world of nature. Nobody has ever dreamt that such a calculation would even be possible. Injustice, if it have any meaning at all in this respect, is therefore written large all over the face of Life and Nature.

Sentimentalists, like Wordsworth and Rousseau, by wilfully turning their backs upon

the cruel sufferings of animals and insects in Nature, have been able to present a picture of Life to the world as attractive as it is false. But although pleasant lies of this sort are bound ultimately to do a good deal of damage, and have actually done a good deal of damage, they are also bound ultimately to be found out, and it is to be hoped that there is then an end to them, once and for all.

It is not accurate, therefore, to read a moral order into the Universe. Life and Nature are essentially amoral. They are not concerned even with the A.B.C. of morality. All life outside human society, therefore, knows nothing of justice. On the contrary, "Life is appropriation, injury, conquest of the strange and weak, suppression, severity, obtrusion of its own forms, incorporation, and, at the very least, exploitation."

There is no such thing as a natural balance of virtue and reward, crime and punishment—even in the realm of social justice this balance is difficult enough to achieve. Misery is frequently encountered in Nature—in fact, universally so, divorced from sin. To perceive anything else in Nature is to contemplate her through rather smoky human spectacles—anthropomorphically.

If, then, this notion of justice exists at all, it is only in the fancy of the morally prejudiced. Morality arises only in human society; therefore justice is exclusively a social phenomenon, a social expedient. It is not a universal law, but a concept of the social human being. It is not a principle transcending social life; it is the creation

of social life, and means nothing outside it ; it is man-made, man-maintained.

In the light of this conclusion, what is meant, therefore, when Mrs. Jelleby-Jones, of Hampstead, who is a welfare worker, exclaims over her dinner to her husband that it seems so "unjust" that the poor little diseased babies she has been inspecting that afternoon should have been born with such a heavy handicap ?

Whose injustice, what injustice does she mean ? Does she know what she means, and does she mean anything ?

We have seen that if her statement is to have any meaning at all, it must signify that mankind is unjust, that human society is unjust, and that, therefore, her particular form of human society is unjust ; consequently that she and her husband, as forming part of that society, are unjust.

Truth to tell, she will mean nothing half as intelligible as that ; but since this is the only meaning her remark can have, let us examine it calmly.

She supposes an injustice to have been perpetrated because—say—three babies she has seen were born diseased. This happens in every class, irrespective of banking account, and the poor are not more unhealthy than the rich. She says the babies will be handicapped. Their disease is an obstacle in their road ; therefore it is unjust. She is perfectly right, in a sense, when she says that disease is an obstacle. But it might be pointed out to her that to be born of stupid or criminally disposed parents would also constitute an obstacle. Psychologists now tell us that even to be born of parents

who disagree constitutes a grave obstacle in life. It might be argued that to be born of people who can afford to keep cars also constitutes an initial obstacle, because great comfort and luxury reduces moral fibre, paralyses energy, and destroys eagerness for the fray. It might be pointed out to her that to be born the son of the King of England is an obstacle in life, because it limits freedom; a man cannot aspire to becoming Bishop of Bristol if he is destined to become his Britannic Majesty. If being born of sick or stupid parents is an injustice, all these cases are injustices also.

Mrs. Jelleby-Jones might reply that illness or disease is at least an obstacle that could be avoided, whereas to have as father the King of England, is not a fate that could so easily be circumvented. Agreed! But only flagrant cases of illness or disease are even noticeable. What about those more subtle gradations of health or ill-health which though they are frequently sufficiently virulent to convert a potential genius into a merely talented man, or a potentially talented man into a fool, are nevertheless not sufficiently glaring to be observed or guarded against? Would Mrs. Jelleby-Jones argue that to be born of ugly parents, for instance, is an injustice? To be ugly is certainly a great disadvantage, particularly to the women of any tasteful country. Is it also an injustice?

Look at it how we will, injustice, or inequality of endowment and of chances of survival, is rooted in the very heart of Nature. Society endeavours to mitigate Nature's harsh rule by means of preventing

or assuaging unnecessary suffering, succouring indigence, and trying to make ugly and botched people forget their ugliness; but society cannot divorce herself completely from Nature. She is bound to act with Nature and allow natural laws to operate with comparative freedom in her midst. Particularly is this so with regard to the act of pro-creation. Here is a natural process, and a natural passion, on which society can only impose a certain modicum of order; she cannot do away with it. Now, as we have seen, the sort of injustice that we are examining in this chapter, is rooted in the very act of procreation, which is essentially a natural act. Two people, male and female, decide to procreate a third creature (more frequently they do not give the third creature a thought)—a child, who can have no voice in deciding whether it should be born or not, whether it should be born of precisely those parents or not, or whether it should be their daughter or their son, their legitimate or illegitimate offspring. It cannot even choose which parent it will resemble. What could be more unjust? It is obviously one of those manifestations of Nature, of Life, which like all those we have been examining, is completely and hopelessly unjust. It is the amoral character of Nature and Life persisting in spite of moral or social conditions. This amount of Nature's, or Life's, inevitable injustice must be accepted, or included with the bargain which is life.

What, then, do these people really mean who rail against this so-called injustice—this necessary survival of natural and vital

amorality within a moral society? They are, of course, extravagantly stupid. They read their own back-parlour ethics into Nature's scheme, conclude erroneously that she is just, and then wherever this kind of injustice appears, they throw the responsibility of it on to man instead of on to Nature. They rightly assume that "injustice" can be only man-made, and imagine that in railing against this "injustice" of their fancy, they are really opposing something substantial, some grievance that could, or ought to be, redressed, if society or the government were more moral.

This "injustice" of their fancy, however, as we have seen, is built up upon an idea of universal and eternal Justice which is a pure myth. Justice exists nowhere outside civilised man's own institutions, and least of all in Nature. Whenever and wherever, therefore, Nature, pure and undefiled, peeps out even in our civilised societies, as it does in procreation, there also appears, and cannot fail to appear, what these people call "injustice."

Civilised man has done his utmost to mitigate Life's natural "injustices"—to use these people's language—but since in order to survive he is bound to allow Nature a certain modicum of free-play within his societies, a certain modicum of so-called "injustice" cannot be removed from even the most ideal and perfect community.*

Thus, far from this "injustice" of the stupid sentimentalists *à la* Gambetta, etc.,

* So long, that is to say, as free mating is not made a criminal offence, and even then the harshness of the natural law will only be partially mitigated.

etc., being man-made, or man-contrived, it is man who has done, and still does, his utmost to mitigate its asperities. But because he cannot sweep it away without also sweeping away Life itself, or without tampering with a very sacred function of his fellows, it is preposterous to hold him responsible for it.

Apart from the creation and administration of law in an organised society, therefore, and the accepted rules which control the treatment of one man by another, or of a child by its parents, or *vice versâ*, justice has no genuine existence at all. To complain about the absence of a purely fantastic conception, therefore, is an absurdity. As well might you complain that your son is born without wings, or that you yourself do not possess seven-league boots.

In its essence, however, this act of setting up an impossible ideal, which is supposed to belong to the very scheme of the universe, amounts to an attitude of hostility to life, because it is tantamount to a refusal to accept life as she is—that is to say, amoral. It is equivalent to setting up a false scale of measurement, in order to depreciate human society and its value.

When once these people are convinced that the "injustices" about which they complain really are rooted in Life and Nature, they cry out desperately: Look how dreadful Life is, she is unjust! But it is only in their benighted brains that the ideal of justice was ever conceived as inherent in phenomena, as a possible attribute of life. Life is amoral; therefore she is essentially beyond or beneath justice. You can only

love her or loathe her as she is. And it is a proof of degeneracy to loathe her as she is. Hence degenerates invariably clothe her with false attributes, and talk about a "*justice immanente*"; they are not brave enough, or proud enough, to love her without trying to paint her in the light of their back-parlour morality.

All Life's light and shade, all her excitement, all her incitement to man to compete with energy and spirit in her game, depends for more than half its charm precisely on the fact that she is amoral—that is to say, that she produces inequalities, contrasts and divergent types, indifferently, lavishly, without taking thought, without mercy. Her call is to the brave, to the stout of heart, and to the adventurous and spirited. Those who in the midst of this great adventure cry out "Injustice!" either misunderstand, or wilfully misrepresent the whole scheme.

The alleged "injustices" of Life, can never be put right by man. They are beyond his power to remedy, however just his laws may be. All he can do is to mitigate the asperity of life for those of Nature's less fortunately endowed offspring, who cannot aspire to the highest ridge; but even in doing this, he must be careful not to make it too easy for Nature's failures to multiply over abundantly, otherwise the race most certainly deteriorates.

The modern tendency, therefore, which consists in deliberately confounding the issue, by pointing to a number of Nature's own "injustices" as if they were the outcome of man-made law, man-made conditions,

and clamouring for them to be redressed, is wholly vicious. It deceives the multitude, maddens them into a false sense of their grievances, and frequently leads to disturbances which, though they prove sadly destructive of life and treasure, *must* leave things more or less as they were, because the grievances chiefly complained of, are frequently rooted in Life itself.

This does not mean that there are not man-made injustices in the creation and administration of law. Unfortunately they are too often as plentiful as those of Life itself. But by far the grossest so-called injustices are those of Nature and Life, which cannot by any means be removed, and least of all can they be even mitigated in a country whose population distinguishes so imperfectly between grievances which can be rightly brought home to man, and those that are inherent in the natural order of existence, that while they blindly clamour for the removal of the latter, the former, which might be corrected and are within man's power to correct, are generally left studiously alone.

CHAPTER III

EQUALITY

“ We hold these truths to be self-evident ; that all men were created equal ; that they were endowed by their Creator with inalienable rights ; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”—THOMAS JEFFERSON (*Declaration by the Representatives of the United States).

FROM whichever quarter the principle of human equality is approached, it appears to recede into ever deeper dimness and obscurity the more hotly it is pursued. What does this elusiveness signify? Has the principle any reality at all? That is to say, is it something that can be realised? Or is it the most unscrupulous lie that has ever been sewn as a device upon the banner of a faction? In any case it seems to provoke very real emotions. Thump your fist hard enough, and shout from a public platform: “ Ladies and gentlemen, what we want more than anything else to-day, that which our birth, our common origin, our common shape and stature—aye, even our common spark of Divine Spirit—most surely guarantees us, is Equality, ladies and gentlemen, the blessed condition of Equality ! ”

Pronounce the words emphatically enough,

* Perhaps it is only fair to remind the reader that Jefferson was the United States minister plenipotentiary in Paris in 1785, and that he had, therefore, imbibed deeply much of the nonsense that was current in France at the time.

as your exordium, and your whole audience will cheer and applaud as with one voice.

Not one of the assembled crowd will protest indignantly that you have been talking nonsense. Everybody will really believe that your words have some meaning, and a beautiful meaning.

We have already seen, however, that a word does not require to have any precise meaning, or any definite association whatever, in order to excite pleasurable feelings in those who hear it pronounced, or in order to provoke these people to energetic action. Is Equality perhaps one of these empty, inflammatory words?

It is originally a term borrowed from mathematics. The mathematician says:—
"Two and two are equal; this triangle and that are equal; this length and that length are equal; this weight and that weight are equal."

He is dealing with mere ciphers, symbols or abstractions, and consequently the mathematician has everything his own way, and so long as he abides by ciphers, symbols and abstractions we have no wish to interfere. He can carry his egalitarian principle right through the English weights and measures, *viâ* the decimal system, into geometry. He is speaking of pure abstractions, arbitrarily supposed to be identical, and if it amuses him to postulate equality as their characteristic, nobody cares. They are his abstractions, his ciphers, he can postulate what he likes about them. We have the feeling that it does not matter. It is only when the mathematician, who, as a rule, is a hopeless psychologist, begins to apply

the lifeless notions he has learnt in his study, to the world of activity and reality; it is only when he begins to speak of things that are not his own abstractions—things that really have an existence known to us—that we immediately begin to feel that he is taking liberties with reality.

For instance, if he say that a certain 2,000 pear leaves are equal to another 2,000 pear leaves, we who know that no two leaves have ever been known to be exactly the same, straightway call him to order and say: “No, sir, abide by your abstractions! That statement of yours is not true.” Likewise, if he say that a certain 2,000 cows are equal to another 2,000 cows, we feel that he is either taking too much for granted, or else that he should try to enlist our confidence by specifying the precise weight and individual qualities of each cow in each set, before inviting us to acquiesce in his assertion. And even if the two sets of 2,000 cows weighed exactly the same amount and were of the same race, we should still feel that there were differences in the quality and supply of milk in each set, as also in the vitality of the respective cows in each set, etc., which ought to be taken into account and which it would hardly be possible to estimate with perfect accuracy.

But let us think of things which have less individual divergence from the common type. Let us think of screws, bolts, plates, chain links, etc. After these have been made with the utmost care by means of machines capable of almost mathematical precision, and when once they have been accurately weighed and found equal both

as regards size and ponderability, you would think that you had groups of things or individual things as between which you would be justified in postulating the attribute equality. But if you should ask anyone accustomed to dealing with such things, he would tell you that one bolt in ten or in twenty usually splits, that one screw in a hundred or in a thousand usually strips, and that one plate in fifty usually cracks. Thus here and there, even when enormous pains have been taken to attain uniformity, marked differences become apparent. What about those differences that are not sufficiently marked to be noticeable until some considerable time has elapsed?

Can equality be postulated of no two objects on earth then?

Provided that the mathematical abstracts, or arbitrary identities, size, weight, bulk and number, alone, are in question, equality can be postulated; but the moment mathematical abstractions are departed from, it is not only unsafe, it is positively dishonest to speak of equality.

For instance, you can say that these hundred rails are equal to those hundred rails in number, in weight, or in length. You could not say that these hundred rails are equal to those hundred rails in durability, resilience, or frangibility. You might say they are approximately equal in these attributes, or as nearly as possible equal; but apart from the arbitrary identities or abstractions of the mathematicians, you could not postulate perfect equality.

Does the term "Equality" mean anything at all apart from these mathe-

mathematical abstractions then?—Absolutely nothing!

What, then, are those people who earnestly and warmly claim and advocate equality among men—*men* who are so different in their ancestry, size, shape, endowments, beauty, desires, appetites, and spirit, whose very features proclaim their inequality as they approach us?

Are such clamourers for equality all liars?

They are certainly liars, but the majority of them are probably perfectly unconscious liars. From childhood onwards they may have heard the word "Equality" pronounced as if it implied a very certain reality, a very much coveted desideratum. Deep emotions over which they have no control, and concerning which they have even less understanding, are therefore stirred every time they hear the word, or see it written or printed; and thus they live and die earnestly believing that this meaningless principle "Equality," if it could be realised, would be an unqualified boon.

How the equality is to be achieved, whether by bleeding the too sanguine, truncating the too tall, deliberately debilitating the too healthy, delicately injuring the brains of the too intelligent, or systematically fattening the too thin, nobody troubles definitely to specify. Egalitarians have a vague notion concerning a still more vague desideratum, and this, coupled with the word "Equality," that is utterly meaningless outside the abstractions of the mathematicians, completes the content of their hallucination.

But, it may be objected, the world is surely not so foolish. What men mean

when they demand equality, is equality before the law—that is to say, that the law-officers should regard them, for the purposes of law-administration as equal to one another in their chances of being right.

This may be true of a few cases in which the cry "Equality" is set up; but is it true of all? Do all egalitarians court equality because at some time or another they may have to confront the officers of the law?

No, says the objector, but the law is not merely felt when two litigants face each other, or when a criminal is apprehended; it is felt in the home of the just as well as in that of the unjust; it is felt in the life of the city, in the village and in the factory.

But it is precisely in such circumstances that the law would be most harsh, if it assumed equality. It is compelled to assume inequality in legislating for large communities, otherwise it could not be just at all.

The very symbol of justice—a blindfold female with a pair of scales in one hand—is a mathematical symbol, which can have no relation to human affairs, but only to the mathematical abstraction, weight.

"A good law should be good for all men," said Condorcet, "even as a proposition is true for all men."

"The capital error of the whole French Revolution," says Louis Madelin, "lies in the dogma thus proclaimed by Condorcet."*

Yes, but Condorcet was not a political

* See *The French Revolution*, by LOUIS MADELIN, p. 15. The author continues: "He [CONDORCET] and his co-religionists, who knew nothing of true sociology, which has its foundations in psychology, here prove themselves still more ignorant of history."

thinker, he was one of the foremost mathematicians of his time! And Thomas Jefferson, whose words head this chapter, was his disciple.

The danger to which the mathematician, like the engineer exposes us, begins when he pretends to apply his principles to human affairs.

But, continues the objector, although it is admitted that initial equality, as between human beings, or any living things for that matter, is an impossibility, seeing that nature's products are all diverse and unequal; and although subsequent equality is hard to achieve without behaving unjustly and barbarously to all those who depart from a certain norm or standard—that is to say, without bleeding, debilitating, truncating, or otherwise injuring all those who vary from an arbitrarily selected pattern—there surely can be such a thing as Equality of Opportunity.

At this point in the discussion it is only fair to say that most opponents of Egalitarianism promptly capitulate, and eagerly concede that equality of opportunity is a genuine desideratum capable of practical realisation.

At the risk of appearing captious and sophistical, however, it can no more be admitted here that Equality of Opportunity has any actual possibilities of realisation than has the principle of equality itself. It is, in fact, an illusion rather more complex and more serious than the latter. For it presupposes, not only equality among men, but equality of opportunity—two equalities instead of one—and among a class

of things which can be made equal only by a miracle.

In the first place, it may be assumed, without any further discussion, that a moment's calm reflection is enough to dispel even from the meanest intelligence, the illusion that men can ever be equal.

On this score, alone, then, opportunities cannot be equal, because, however accurately their equality may be established, in regard to a supposed standard man, the moment they are placed in relation to the multitude of unequal men, they, too, become unequal. For an opportunity is not a thing in itself; it only becomes something in relation to the creature who seizes it. Given an equal means of access to a particular ridge or hill-top, the opportunity to reach that hill-top or ridge, is the equal means of access *plus* the kind of creature to whom it is afforded. The introduction of an unequal element on the one hand—the men—makes the other element, the means of access, not unequal as means of access in the abstract, but unequal as opportunity in the concrete.

Suppose as much inequality between three men as exists between a hen, a hare, and a hippopotamus—and as regards fleetness and swimming power such inequality is not unusual between men—how could you devise equal opportunities which would enable all three men to reach a certain objective at the same moment of time, if a strip of water, a high wall, and a ravine stood between the starting point and the objective?

You might do it by first holding a rehearsal, in which you would accurately time

each man and note his abilities, and then handicap the fleetest accordingly.

But unfortunately life cannot be rehearsed, a life-handicap cannot be calculated. Besides, it is to the advantage of society not to handicap her fleetest and her best. As Lord Morley very rightly says: "The well-being of the community demands the allotment of high function in proportion to high faculty."*

But suppose our objector replies: Very well, but that is all we ask. We do not demand a handicap; we simply demand an equal means of access to a particular objective, no matter whether ultimately those means prove unequal or not, owing to the inequality of the men to whom they are open.

It may then be asked whether even this equality in means of access is not in itself utterly fanciful and fantastic. Given the radical inequality of men at birth, together with the highly complex arrangement of modern society, with its enormous variety of prizes, it may reasonably be questioned whether it be even possible, not to mention practicable.

A large number of people cannot all travel along the same narrow path. Several narrow paths all exactly alike would have to be constructed. The accidents, vicissitudes, fatalities that would attend some of the early travellers along the roads—faintness, loss of luggage, sprains, deaths, etc.—would either impede or facilitate the way of the later travellers. Thus, in life, the means

* Rousseau. Vol. I., p. 181.

of access themselves, however equal at the start, would quickly acquire unforeseen inequalities.

Let us select an example from life in England.

Two boys, A and B, one living at Whitstable, the other in London, are quite unequal in gifts, ancestral tradition, build and tastes. Nevertheless, it is desired to give them an equal opportunity, say, of earning £1,000 a year when they are forty. The father of A wishes A to have the same opportunities as B, and B's father holds the same view about B in his relation to A.

Very well, A, having learnt the art of oyster fishing, which is the principal industry of Whitstable, is sent to London to learn to be a clerk, and B is sent from London to Whitstable, after training as a clerk, in order to have an opportunity of being an oyster fisherman. Meanwhile, A's father has heard that B is also studying agriculture at a school of agriculture somewhere near Whitstable. A, after having trained as a clerk, is therefore recalled to Whitstable and made to undergo a course of agriculture, and B having acquired a knowledge of oyster-fishing and agriculture, is sent back to London to learn French, which A acquired there. Ultimately, however, A's father, remembering that a brother of his did extremely well as an engineer, prevails upon B's father to consent to the plan of sending both boys A and B to Armstrong & Whitworth's or to Vickers.

We can imagine both A's father and B's father dying long before A and B had had every opportunity that society now offers

to the aspirant for success ; we can also picture A and B themselves becoming grey-haired octogenarians before they finally settled down.

No, says the objector. That is not what opportunity egalitarians mean. They mean not that everybody should have an equal chance of succeeding in all the careers that lie open, but that they should have an opportunity of succeeding in life.

But what is meant by success here ? Does it consist in becoming Prime Minister of England, or Commander-in-Chief in India, or Lord Mayor, or Editor of *John Bull* ? In any case opportunities for becoming any one of these four cannot be made equal. Perhaps success consists in becoming a millionaire ? But who is going to determine the equality of opportunity for this achievement ? Pulitzer, one of the most powerful American millionaires of the first decade of this century, crawled ashore in America as a penniless fugitive, after having swum from the ship that had conveyed him as an emigrant from Europe !

Moreover, supposing that a boy's opportunity-egalitarianism extends beyond the shores of his native land, and he says : I wish to have the same opportunity as the Frenchman, or the Canadian, or the Chinaman. What then ? Is there any valid reason why opportunity-egalitarianism should be confined to a single country, or even to a single continent ?

What, then, is left of this cry for equality of opportunity ? Simply the sting of resentment which gives rise to it ; and this we shall now proceed to examine.

What kind of person is it who clamours for this meaningless desideratum, equality? Certainly not the beautiful person, because to him equality, if it could be achieved, would result in bringing him down to the common level. Neither can it be the person specially gifted in any of the arts and sciences; for, again, equality, if it could by some miracle be wrought, would amount to wiping out the advantage of such special gifts. The self-reliant, the strong, the skilful, the able and the desirable, in all walks of life, are never stirred by this cry for equality; because they look down from their eminence, and cannot therefore conceive that levelling could possibly prove an advantage.

It must therefore be the undesirable, the unskilful, the incompetent, the ugly, the ungifted, in all walks of life, the incapable of all classes, who want equality. And they want it because, looking up from their position of chafing mediocrity and ungainliness, and beholding their more gifted brethren, they realise that equality must redound to their benefit. A moment's reflection would tell them that it is an impossible ideal; their mortified vanity, however, is stronger than their reason, and urges them to believe in it, ridiculous as it may be.

" Envy wears the mask of Love, and, laughing
sober fact to scorn,

Cries to weakest, as to strongest, ' Ye are
equals, equal-born.' " *

" What made the Revolution? Vanity!
Liberty was nothing but a pretext! " Thus

* See Tennyson, *Locksley Hall, Sixty Years After*.

spoke Napoleon, the greatest and probably the deepest man since Cæsar.*

But, however fantastic the cry for equality may seem, it is a dangerous cry, because it is still capable of stimulating and directing energy. It is, therefore, still a weapon in the hands of the unscrupulous agitator and demagogue.

It means nothing. We have seen that it has only a mathematical value. But until the ignorant, the arrogant, and the revengeful among Nature's (not society's)† failures are brave and honest enough to realise that the apparent injustice of the radical inequality of man, is irremediable and inevitable, until they realise that it cannot be corrected without resorting to the most savage extreme of Procrustean barbarity, the lie Equality, as a high explosive, as a generator of social perturbations and upheavals, as a weapon and a war-cry, will continue to give rise to meaningless hopes, and to suggest utterly false claims

* See also H. de Balzac. *Le Cabinet des Antiques*: "En France, ce qu'il y a de plus national, est la vanité. La masse des vanités blessées y a donné soif d'égalité."

† Nature's failures and society's failures are not identical. Nature's failure is frequently a creature below par, he is frequently botched and undesirable. Society's failure may be an extremely desirable person, to whom modern conditions are so loathsome that he cannot adapt himself to them and become successful. That is why the Eugenists, who are prone to class the unsuccessful of the age with the undesirable, still have a good deal to learn. The unsuccessful now-a-days are certainly the biologically "unfit"; but the question that must be decided before you conclude that they are also "undesirable" is whether present conditions demand desirable or undesirable qualities in those who become successfully adapted to them,—in those, that is to say, who are "fit."

to the overweening ambition of all discontented humanity.

There is, however, another factor in this clamour for the impracticable ideal of equality, and that is our old friend the natural indolence of the weary and the exhausted. If all were equal—no matter how this equality is to be achieved—it is felt that things would be easier. Not only would the shame of the ugly and the repulsive in the presence of the beautiful and the gifted be spared, but the uphill race of the poor runners beside the fleet and enduring runners, would also be rendered less strenuous. The ineffective brain-cracking of the fools beside the swift and efficient thought of the intelligent would be less heart-rending, and so on.

Finally, the notion of Justice, of "immanent" Justice, constrains those who hold it, to assume a scheme of life, according to which all human beings are at least equal at birth. Such people very easily argue as follows: If all human beings were not equal at birth, it would not be just, "immanent" Justice would be caught red-handed in an act of flagrant injustice at the very portals of life. But this is inconceivable, therefore all must be born equal. We have seen, however, that this notion of justice is quite as mythical as the idea of equality itself.

Generated in this way, by innumerable powerful wishes, the idea of equality begins to take shape and assume the appearance of a realisable object in the minds of the weary and the exhausted; and without troubling to ask themselves what the merits or possibilities of their idea may be, they are prepared to advocate it, applaud it—aye

and even fight for it, at the cost of all the rest of the world—so long as they continue to be assured by unscrupulous people that it will effect all they want it to effect.

So far, then, it has been impossible to trace any substantial measure of reality behind this notion and this cry of equality. Is it conceivable that a word should give rise to such intense feeling and yet bear no relation whatever to practical life? Was President Jefferson raving when he, following the lead of almost thirty millions of French people, also spoke of equality as a desideratum that could be gravely and confidently placed on a political programme? For it seems only fair to presume that he could not have been serious when he maintained that all men were created equal.

It is possible that at the end of the 18th century equality as a cry had a very definite meaning. It probably meant in its best and most rational interpretation, that every citizen had an equal right to have his interests safeguarded by the laws of his society, that is to say, by the government of his country. This was not recognised as a principle by the rulers of France before the Revolution, and it is at least conceivable that the substantial reality behind this cry for equality was precisely the demand on the part of all that each man's interests should be protected with equal vigour and conscientiousness by the state.

But in this sense has the cry for equality any meaning?

In so far as certain sections of the community may still believe that their interest is not so perfectly safeguarded as that of

other sections, the cry for equality of treatment has as much meaning to-day as it had in the last years of the 18th century, but beyond this one claim, it is difficult to discover any meaning in it whatsoever.

Unfortunately, however, this very necessary and incontrovertible limitation of the idea of equality, is not likely to deter those whose base purpose may best be served by extending the significance of the word beyond its proper bounds, when appealing to the least desirable elements in every nation; and unless in the mass of the people of all countries there is that understanding of the term which alone bears any resemblance to reality, mankind will continue at intervals to be incited to energetic though fruitless violence in the pursuit of a phantom which can have no practical or effective existence outside the calculations of a mathematician's brain.

CHAPTER IV

FREEDOM

“ Freedom such as God hath given
Unto all beneath His heaven,
With their breath, and from their birth,
Though guilt would sweep it from the earth.”
—BYRON (*Poems on Napoleon*).

“ MAN was born free, and everywhere he is in chains.”—This meaningless, but highly inflammatory statement of Rousseau’s is probably at the root of most of the misunderstanding that prevails to-day in regard to the subject of liberty. Just as people eagerly accept, without a moment’s thought, the lie that men are born equal, so they are only too ready to embrace a doctrine according to which they may lay claim to a sort of primitive, or natural freedom, which has been stolen from them by their rulers, their civilisation, or by invading hordes.

On examination, of course, the proposition “ men are born free ” proves to be wholly and wildly fantastic.

Freedom implies, one would suppose, the right, the capacity, and the opportunity to choose one course from another, one kind of life from another. But how much can a man really choose ?

At birth, for instance, all kinds of conditions are imposed upon the future adult—conditions which are bound to determine the whole of the principal events of his or her

career,—over which there is no possibility of control whatsoever.

It may be assumed, for instance, that a baby might like to choose its nationality and the language that it will speak in later life. Can it do so? It may reasonably be taken for granted that a baby might like to choose its parents, its brothers and sisters, and its other relatives. Can it do so? Its very constitution and health are dependent upon the kind of mother and father it has ; its very happiness and success as an adult may depend upon the way in which it is treated as an infant. Has it any choice, any freedom, in regard to any of these matters?

It is not fanciful to suspect that the baby might like to choose its particular form and features, its ultimate height as an adult, etc., etc. The most vital and important issues will hang upon this question of its face and form when it is grown up. But it has no power whatsoever to determine any one of these most vital and important conditions.

An imaginative baby, realising the inexorable fate which hangs over certain gifts, certain endowments, and a particular sex, might regard it as all important to be able to select these freely.

But the rigidity of natural law, the impossibility of controlling any of these matters, ordain that at birth a baby has all its important ultimate characteristics, and therefore all its proclivities, tastes, vices, virtues, and even aspirations settled for it. Its nationality, its language, its parents, its other relatives, its constitution, its degree of beauty, its stature, its physical and mental endowments, its sex,—all these things, upon which the

figure it will ultimately cut in the world most surely depend,—are fixed by an iron necessity which allows of no choice, no preference, —aye, and scarcely any modification either.

If this is freedom, then what does constraint, what does oppression mean ?

It may be objected that this is not what Rousseau meant ; that Rousseau maintained that man was born free, because in a savage state he would really be free from the conventions, laws, and constraints of civilisation.

This appears convincing enough. The savage is certainly free from the laws and constraints of civilisation, but the savage race has yet to be found that is free from all conventions, laws and constraints, nor is it by any means certain that these obstacles to freedom are the more pleasant for being barbarous instead of civilised.

But even if we suppose that Rousseau's alleged freedom of babies is a reality, at what point, it may be asked, is it exchanged for bondage ?

Most people would reply : when the child goes to school. It is at school that the shackles of civilisation are first fastened on the free infant's wrists. It is the work that civilisation ultimately holds in store for the child that necessitates his being trained and "educated."

To this the naturalist and anthropologist might reply : is there now, or has there ever been, a race of men or animals that did not have to undergo some process of training in childhood in order to learn to be efficient adults ?

Of course there neither is, nor ever was any such race.

Iron necessity again precludes the possibility of this alleged freedom even in childhood.

In manhood, again, freedom is purely a will-o'-the-wisp. No man who wishes to continue living is free. He is bound to procure food and clothing for himself even in the cannibal islands. If he have passions, he is bound to find some means of gratifying them. This means shouldering responsibilities; for no community, even of animals, undertakes to rear the fruits of other people's passions. He cannot even select his calling, for his calling will depend upon his special aptitudes. In fact, the more gifted he is, and the more marked his capabilities, the less will he be able to choose how to earn a living. Only a man of mediocre and insignificant gifts is really free to choose his calling, because he feels no irresistible impulse in a given direction. But these mediocre people who are free to choose their calling, don't really choose a "calling" at all—the very idea of choosing something to which one is called is absurd—what they choose is a more or less characterless and humdrum means of earning a living, which requires neither very special gifts nor any marked proclivities. To be free to choose what one will be, is always a sign of hopelessly humble tastes and endowments.

Putting it at its lowest, however, we might concede the point that *as far as choosing a means of livelihood is concerned*, there are a certain number of very mediocre men whose gifts are so indistinct and feeble, and whose

tastes are so wavering and undefined, that they are "free."*

Apart from these unhappy individuals, then, if Rousseauesque freedom exist at all, it exists only between the hour of birth and the hour when the child first goes to school. We have seen that even this is untrue. But has it even a semblance of truth as a conclusion?

Surely nothing could be clearer than the fact that even in those years freedom is as remote as ever; for quite apart from the reasons already adduced above, it will easily be seen that the infant is as much the victim of convention and form as any adult could possibly be. It has a home, its life is subjected to rules, to a time-table, it cannot eat or do what it likes, except within very well-defined limits severely imposed.

"It can think what it likes," somebody may object.

But even this is not strictly true. Its thoughts are as much necessitated by its environment and its constitution as is its food.

If it is born in England or France, for instance, it will be brought up to believe in "immanent justice," in "equality," in "freedom." It cannot escape these imbecilities. They are its fate. It will be taught the inanity that "every man has a right to his own opinion," and that "Britons never never shall be slaves,"—whatever that means, if it means anything at all. Later in

* But even this amount of freedom in the mediocre is limited by the fact that the mediocre cannot choose a means of livelihood in which super-mediocre endowments would be necessary.

life it may claim the idea that "every man has a right to his own opinion" as its own. It will have forgotten how it could not help holding this idea, any more than it could help learning the English language.

Rousseau then was talking nonsense when he said that men were born free; but both his reading and his education were so poor that it is doubtful whether he knew that he was talking nonsense.

Apart from Rousseauesque freedom, however, has the word no meaning?

It will be seen that, in the end, it has very little.

Voluntary actions, or actions that are performed as the result of a free choice between two or more alternatives, are not known. They never occur. Even when they appear to occur, they are generally, if not always, associated with a weak or useless personality.

Strong natures have no choice; they have no alternative; they have therefore no freedom. They are driven to their deeds by an iron necessity. If they speak or write, it is out of the fulness of their hearts. It is a phenomenon akin to the mechanical overflow of a flooded basin. If they go in search of big undertakings and of vast responsibilities, in order to shoulder them, it is because they have a store of accumulated energy which must discharge itself over a large area, over a large mass of material.

When Napoleon took leave of his comrades in Egypt, before embarking on that gigantic enterprise, the reconstitution of anarchical bleeding and devastated France, he said: "I am going to drive out the lawyers."

His strength demanded a gigantic task, just

as the nasal horn of the rhinoceros drives the animal who possesses it to uproot the soil. He could not help himself. Martin Luther likewise had no choice. Before the famous Diet of Worms, he openly avowed this lack of freedom. He said: "Here I stand. I cannot act otherwise. God help me."

Indeed the character of all strength is precisely that it gives those who possess it no choice, no "freedom." The moment choice enters into the domain of action, the moment there is apparent freedom or self-determination, weakness, or a lack of native impetus may be suspected.

Thomas de Quincey, that profound psychologist of the artist's soul, explained the matter very well in his *Autobiography*. Discussing the nature of true poetry, he said: "By far the larger proportion of what is received in every age for poetry, and for a season usurps that consecrated name, is not the spontaneous overflow of real unaffected passion, deep, and at the same time original, and also forced into public manifestation of itself from the necessity which cleaves to all passion."*

It will be seen that de Quincey here speaks of a "spontaneous overflow" which is "forced into public manifestation of itself from the necessity which cleaves to all passion." There is no freedom about it, no choice. It flows from an impetuous and imperious abundance.

In the light which this throws on all human greatness or strength, what does the value of freedom appear to be?

* *Collected Writings*. (London: A. C. Black). Vol. 1., p. 194.

Does it not seem as if freedom and the apparent liberty to choose belong essentially to a lack of strength, to an absence of necessity in the characteristic action of man? To be able to weigh and select either one of two alternatives,—say action or inaction,—implies that no overwhelming native impetus forces a man to the one and blinds him to the other. Is it possible then that the very cry of "freedom" belongs essentially to weakness? to feebleness of character?

Let another example be taken. A young man A. has just reached the age of one and twenty without having had a serious affair of the heart. His friends regard him as free to pursue any pastime, any sport. When once he has discharged the duties by means of which he earns his livelihood, he is always free to join a tennis party, a cricket team, a bridge party, or a debating circle. His mind can devote itself to the task of choosing what he shall do,—is it to be tennis, cricket, bridge, or argument? He has no overpowering inclination for anything particular, consequently he is free to choose.

Suddenly, however, he meets a young lady B, who strains a certain fibre in his being almost to snapping point. The tension of this strain is so powerful that, like the main spring of a watch, it presses its host to constant activity in a certain direction. The direction in this case is B's person. Now choice falls out of the question altogether. It is no longer a matter of dwelling critically upon cricket, tennis, bridge or argument, and selecting that which seems for the moment the most alluring pastime. The tension in A's being relaxes only at one sound, at one

call. It is B B B —B recurring. When urged by his whilom tennis companions to join them, these friends now encounter, not hesitating freedom, but formidable resistance, immovable decision, determined refusal. When approached by his debating society, he declares that all his spare time is now taken up. He is in fact no longer free. Something strong in him has been roused. He cannot help himself. His actions are no longer voluntary.

But who would long for freedom in such circumstances? Who longs for freedom when bondage is sweet?

It may be taken for granted, then, that strength and greatness know nothing of freedom. The strong man is not free; the great man is not free;—nor for that matter, as history or the observation of our fellows can show, do they wish to be free. Only weakness is apparently free, or is conscious of desiring freedom; because, having no strong native impetus to drive it willy nilly in any given direction, it appears to be able to choose its own direction. Thus only weakness can even desire freedom.

The obvious inference would be that as fast as the mass of mankind decline in strength and greatness, the louder would become the cry for freedom. Is this conclusion valid?

It is only partially so; for there are cases when freedom is demanded not from weakness, but from strength.

Let us abide by the examples we have chosen.

Napoleon, driven by the iron necessity of his native strength, leaves Egypt to make

himself master of France. But suppose that he had been conquered and kept as a harem servant in Egypt, or restrained in some other way from exerting his strength,—what then?

It is conceivable, in that case, that he would have longed for the freedom which would have allowed him to fall into the bondage of his own overpowering impulses to rule and to direct the destiny of France.

For the first time the idea of "freedom" begins to assume a definite shape. It begins to acquire the appearance of a genuine reality.

Judging by Napoleon's case, therefore, we may say of the desire for freedom, that although it never arises in normal conditions, it begins to make a definite appeal when it signifies a release from bondage that is incompatible and inharmonious with strong innate impulses, for a bondage that is compatible and harmonious with strong innate impulses.

The bondage consisting in being a harem servant is incompatible with innate impulses of a stronger order; therefore, although the obedience to impulses of a stronger order also constitutes bondage, Napoleon, as a harem servant, would have longed for the freedom to fall into the bondage of his stronger impulses, because it was there that his "calling" lay.

Reverting to the case of the young man A who became enamoured of a young lady B, we are confronted by a case that is somewhat different; because, although A was apparently "free" before meeting B, he nevertheless

prefers the bondage of his attachment to B to his former freedom. Why,—obviously because his former apparent freedom, was freedom for nothing, a state of being constrained to nothing in particular, a lack of bondage to anything, which was tantamount to a lack of everything.

He finds his strength on meeting B. He finds one of his powerful impulses taking possession of him. He is therefore happy, because, though he is in bondage, a vital impulse is directing his life, a necessity of his being has found a pursuit for him. If his cricket club now kidnap him and imprison him in the cricket field, in order to play in a cricket match, he will make a determined attempt to escape. He will endeavour to obtain freedom. Freedom for what?—Freedom from a bondage incompatible with the powerful impulses of his being, for the purpose of falling into a bondage compatible with the powerful impulses of his being.

Has the “liberty” of our political agitators this meaning? Has it any meaning?

We know that man can never be free. We have seen that from his very birth conditions are imposed upon him which direct his subsequent career as inevitably as railway lines direct the course of a train. Nothing that lives in finite conditions can be free. And no other conditions are known. Life even in the animal world means work, battle, struggle, the observance of certain very strict habits. Human life means work, the observance of social conventions; even the necessity of eating, drinking, breathing and performing the other bodily functions entails responsi-

bility. Work may be altered, the particular social conventions of a nation may be changed; but it is merely a matter of altering one kind into another kind, exchanging one rule for another rule.

What then does the political agitator mean when he offers "Liberty" to those whom he would induce to support or follow him?

It has been seen that the only sense in which liberty as an idea bears any relation to reality, is when it signifies the opportunity that can be given to a man to enable him to exchange a bondage incompatible with his strongest impulses for a bondage that harmonises with them.

Is this the meaning of the cry for freedom to-day? When the newspapers told us that the Great War was fought by us in the cause of "freedom", is this the freedom they meant?

How many of those who believe they aspire to something definite and real when they aspire to "freedom," fully understand the limitations of their ideal? How many of them really possess stronger impulses than those that actually find expression in their daily work?

Some people might reply, "very few." I reply that the number of men and women to-day, who yearn for freedom vaguely, fretfully, and insistently, because they realise dimly that they seek a kind of bondage in which their stronger impulses would have more scope, is very much greater than is generally supposed.

One of the results of the industrial revolution, and of the vast increase of mechanical

appliances and machinery generally, has been the creation of occupations by the hundred thousand, which are in every way besotting, heartrending, and depressing. Sometimes it is their asinine simplicity and their monotony, that destroy the heart of those employed in them, frequently it is their extreme disagreeableness, noisiness or unhealthiness. The particular objection that is common to almost all of them, however, is that the natural impulses which most strongly animate a human being at his work, the impulse to make "a good job" of the task he is occupied upon, the impulse to excel his neighbour in his skill, care or foresight, the impulse to earn the praise of those for whom he is producing the work, the impulse to improve day by day in his own speciality and to derive fair profit from this improvement,—all these natural impulses scarcely ever get an opportunity of expressing themselves in the whole of the week's round; and when the weekly wage is received, it is felt that it has been earned by a species of prostitution rather than by an occupation of which the wage-earner can justly feel proud.

This, as I understand it, is the fundamental meaning of the cry for freedom to-day. In any case it is the only meaning it can have. For freedom in the sense of non-relation, non-dependance, absence of duties, absence of work, and absence of responsibilities or conventions, is utterly impossible. Not only is it utterly impossible to-day, but it has always been impossible. Even animals in a state of nature cannot achieve that condition.

It behoves all those, therefore, who nowa-

days feel this craving for liberty, and who are tempted to follow wherever and whenever it is upheld before them as a cause, thoroughly to understand what it is they are invited to fight for. They must not allow themselves to be led astray by those who would promise them unconstrained freedom of action, for that is a physical impossibility, a lie, an illusion, and a mirage only of the ignorant. They must not be deceived by agitators who lead them to imagine that this "freedom" for which they are invited to strive, is a sort of paradise of fairies, from whom the natural cares and responsibilities of this world have been miraculously lifted. Nor must they suppose that it has much to do with the kind of government which their country enjoys, —whether monarchical, aristocratic, plutocratic or Bolshevik.

Modern governments in their nature can do little for the spiritual requirements of the working man. As far as that freedom is concerned which consists in finding expression in one's daily duties for the strongest impulses of one's being, the masses of the working people in this country were infinitely more "free" under the despotic Tudors than they are at present under the benign rule of the people's elected representatives.

Thus the only kind of freedom that the most honest politician can definitely promise, political freedom—is in itself one of the most wanton deceptions ever practised upon humanity. For what does this political freedom consist of?—It begins and ends with the vote. But in what manner does this constitute freedom? To what extent does

the voter at the poll secure or realise his own freedom by the vote he registers? He gives his vote on a programme which frequently has only a very remote relation to his private life or interests. What can his vote accomplish then in the cause of his own freedom? In registering his vote he is bound to choose one out of two or three men who stand as candidates for his constituency. He may heartily dislike every one of them, and yet be driven to vote for A because A's programme is a little less pernicious than that of B or C. After having voted for A, if our voter is lucky, A may get into Parliament. Everytime A votes in the House itself, however, he may be out-voted by other members, so the very reason for which our voter elected A may be frustrated when once A is an M.P. If, however, our voter does not succeed in getting A into Parliament, he may be one of six or even ten thousand in his constituency who will not be represented in Parliament for four or five whole years. Every Parliament that sits in England fails in this way to be representative of millions of voters. In what manner have these millions of voters achieved their own freedom, or in what manner are they safeguarding it? For even if we grant that it is right that millions of voters should not be represented in Parliament because they belong to the out-voted minority, can we reasonably speak of this vast minority as having secured their political freedom by their vote? But the case is in fact worse than this; for John Stuart Mill, that whole-hearted believer in "democracy," has shown, not only that the minority in the land is bound to be unrepresented in every Parlia-

ment, but that it is also possible for the majority in the land to be unrepresented.* How then the promise even of political freedom, which is the only promise of freedom that an honest politician may make, can even appear to possess any reality, so long as it is dependent entirely upon the vote, it is difficult to discover.

There is only one kind of freedom that bears any relation to reality, only one kind of freedom therefore that can be striven after, that can be realised ; and that is the freedom to exchange a bondage incompatible with

* See *Considerations on Representative Government*, Chapter VII., par. 4 :—" There is not equal suffrage when every single individual does not count for as much as any other single individual in the community. But it is not only a minority who suffer. Democracy thus constituted does not even attain its ostensible object, that of giving the powers of government in all cases to the numerical majority. It does something very different ; it gives them to a majority of the majority, who may be, and often are, but a minority of the whole. All principles are most effectually tested by extreme cases. Suppose then that in a country governed by equal and universal suffrage, there is a contested election in every constituency, and every election is carried by a small majority. The Parliament thus brought together represents little more than a bare majority of the people. This Parliament proceeds to legislate and adopts important measures by a bare majority of itself. What guarantee is there that these measures accord with the wishes of the majority of the people ? Nearly half the electors, having been out-voted at the hustings, have had no influence at all in the decision⁷; and the whole of these may be, a majority of them probably are, hostile to the measures, having voted against those by whom they have been carried. Of the remaining electors nearly half have chosen representatives who, by supposition, have voted against the measures. It is possible therefore, and not at all improbable that the opinion which has prevailed was only agreeable to a minority of the nation, through a majority of that portion of it whom the institutions of the country have erected into a ruling class."

our strongest impulses for a bondage that harmonises with them.

Nothing else has any meaning.

The very success with which voluntary recruiting proceeded directly after the declaration of war against Germany in 1914 is one of the best demonstrations of the truth of this conclusion. For it was the opportunity to exchange an occupation incompatible with the strongest impulses of their being, for an occupation that harmonised with those strongest impulses, that led the majority of those young men to embark for the shambles in France. I mixed with them, so I ought to be able to speak with some knowledge of the subject.

Now the fight for this freedom, for the freedom that, as we have seen, has some meaning, really is worth while. It is a noble fight, and a decent fight. But it is a fight with which no modern Government, Liberal, Socialist, or Bolshevik, can possibly have any sympathy. For Liberal policy has always meant commercial and industrial expansion ; Socialist policy must, if it is honest, include in its programme, compulsory labour, whether compatible or incompatible with the strongest impulses of our being ; and Bolshevik policy, as we have already seen, insists upon this kind of labour. It is, however, precisely the Liberals, the Socialists, and the Bolsheviks who have been loudest in their cries for freedom. If, therefore, this humble attempt at investigating the meaning and limitations of the idea of freedom has done nothing more than demonstrate the hollowness of this Liberal catchword, it cannot have been written or read in vain.

Thus, it is not merely a matter of caution, it is in the highest degree wise, to test every yearning and every demand for freedom, even in one's own breast, with the practical question, "What for?"—"What is the strongest impulse that would find expression if the bondage of the present task were exchanged for the bondage of a new occupation?" Only those who can answer that question satisfactorily, only those who feel that they would increase the fullness of their lives, and thus add to the sum of beauty and happiness in the world, have any right to "freedom," or have any understanding of the only sense in which the idea of freedom can have some meaning.

CHAPTER V

SOCIALISM AND COMMUNISM

“ There is at the present day too great a tendency to believe that it is impossible to resist the progress of a new idea.” Disraeli’s speech on the Compensation for Disturbance Bill. (August, 1880).

A CERTAIN fatalism seems to have overtaken the people of Europe, a mood under the dominion of which they are prepared to regard even their own vagaries and whimsicalities as heretofore most men have regarded the weather, that is, as something inevitable and fore-ordained which nothing can modify, resist or avert.

If a particular group manifest a disposition for war, then it is war to which they resign themselves ; if it is female suffrage, then lo ! Votes for Women come upon them with the certainty of the monsoon or the mistral. Nobody moves, nobody holds up a hand to ward off the approaching scourge, because everybody is either too indolent to make an effort, or too thoroughly persuaded beforehand that nothing can avail, to attempt to interfere with what he calls “ the natural course of events.” The scrub on a wind-swept moor offers more resistance to the elements than does modern man to his fellows’ restless tinkering at the social structure ; and as for the gentle fine rain which, falling athwart the fiercest blast, ultimately constrains it to abate its fury, and to die down, modern man has no knowledge of such tactics, and even

if he had a knowledge of them he would not put it into practice.

Despite the enormous amount of apparent hostility aroused by the immense progress that Socialism and Communism have made since the war, it must not be supposed that with regard to them modern men are feeling any more actively indignant than they have felt towards any other impending change. The hostility, as we have pointed out, is only apparent. For, in their heart of hearts the men of the present day are just as much prepared to resign themselves to Socialism as to civil war, class war, or any other kind of social upheaval.

The factor in the threatening reform which makes certain sections of the public stand as if they really meant to offer resistance, is unfortunately not their intellectual conviction that Socialism or Communism is so palpably wrong that it must be resisted at all costs; but rather the negative quality of inertia, which in this case assumes the appearance of positive resistance because, as it happens, Socialism and Communism propose to oust from positions of ease a great number of people who have not only grown accustomed to ease, but to whom life without ease presents few if any attractions.

Otherwise, Socialism, Communism, Bolshevism, Nihilism—who cares? They appear right because so many millions seem to believe in them. Any "ism" seems to be right to modern man, provided a sufficient number of people raise their hands in favour of it. In this sense, be he a Tory, a Conservative, or a Monarchist, modern man is essentially democratic in spirit.

In the circumstances, with this very doubtful weight of inertia alone on his side, that man may very easily be suspected of quixotic candour, who at this late hour of the day pretends to stand up in face of the approaching wind, not only to resist it, but also to beat it down. And yet this is what the present writer proposes to do, provided only he can demonstrate the validity of his standpoint in a sufficient number of convincing ways to emulate that fine gentle rain which ultimately beats down any wind.

Moreover, in order to do this, it will not be necessary to examine the proposals of Socialism and Communism in detail, but simply to concentrate upon their basic principles, and to show how entirely untenable are the very first positions they take up. Stated in the fairest possible way, their position is as follows :—

The leading Socialist and Communist thinkers are men as a rule whose hearts have been moved by the spectacle of sorrow and hardship which is the lot of a large number of their fellow-creatures on earth ; and they are earnestly desirous so to modify the organisation of society as to render that burden of sorrow and hardship lighter for the mass of mankind.

They see all about them inequalities of the crudest kind, sharp contrasts, and abysmal chasms, and they wish to achieve greater evenness among men.—Why?—Not because the spectacle of mankind thus evened up will necessarily be more picturesque or more harmonious to behold ; but because on the whole it will be less heartrending, less revolting, less inequitable.

They detect in society, as it is at present constituted, an element which they maintain has no business to be there, an element which they honestly believe is not human ; and they feel confident of being able to eliminate it if only they are allowed to effect certain readjustments and re-arrangements of the whole which will radically change the relation of every member of the community to every other member.

This element, which the Socialist and Communist detect in modern society and which they wish to eliminate because it is not human, is Violence.

According to the present writer's belief this is, in a few words, a fair statement, if not the fairest possible statement, of the Socialist and Communist's position.

Assuming at all events that it is correct, it is now possible to examine it and to call attention to the amount of error it contains. For, let the Socialist and Communist say what they will, let them wish rather to substitute the word Predatoriness, or Oppression, or Exploitation, or Slavery, for the word Violence, or for the particular quality in modern society which they would fain eliminate, it does not signify much. All these words in their essence are reducible to the one notion Violence, and Violence we shall therefore name the feature that Socialists and Communists propose to remove from human communities, and which we propose now to examine.

Violence as a phenomenon is not presented to us chiefly in our own societies. Where we recognise its sway to be most general and most rigorous, is in Nature herself, and all

life outside human communities. The life of the jungle, the life of the prairie, the life of the ocean, in all these departments of life, Violence reigns supreme. Indeed we are so familiar with its existence there that we should be astonished if we failed to find it. We open the stomach of a shot leopard and we find in it the mangled remains of some other animal or bird. When we kill a bird and inspect its viscera, we discover the remains of insects, small quadrupeds, or smaller birds. Life outside human societies is little less than a process of preying and mutual suppression and incorporation. Every species behaves as if it alone had the right to prevail, and it endeavours by every means in its power—self-preservation, propagation, rapine and parasitism—to make its own kind predominate on earth.

We ourselves are guilty of violence towards the lower animals, and there are few people who, upon dying a sudden death, would not betray this violence by the contents of their stomachs or intestines.

Violence, therefore, constitutes no novelty to the human being. He knows of it in Nature and he knows he is guilty of it towards those lower animals which he consumes as food. At a first glance then it would appear that violence of a sort is an essential factor in all life, even in human life.

The kind of violence, however, that the Socialist and Communist wish to eliminate from human society is not the violence which men perpetrate against the lower animals; though there are certainly some Socialists who would wish to eliminate that also; but chiefly the violence between man and man.

man and woman, adult and child, or child and child : violence by means of which some man, woman, or child is made the instrument or the tool or the chattel of some other man, woman, or child.

This you may protest is what all societies since Moses, and even before him, have tried their utmost to suppress. To some extent this is true. Murder and assault have been prohibited by most moral codes. The kind of violence, however, that the Socialist and Communist wish to suppress is the violence that is at present tolerated by law, that receives its sanction from society at large, and that men now perpetrate with clean consciences.

How does this violence chiefly arise ?

—By means of the inequalities of human advantages. One man A finds himself by birth or by his own efforts (frequently the outcome of his endowments at birth) in possession of something that somebody else B very much requires ; and before A relinquishes a particle of it, convention allows him to exact some service from B. According to the urgency of B's needs and the quality of B's gifts that service is either very strenuous or comparatively light. For instance, if A happens to be a man of rare genius, holding in his mind the secret of his country's salvation B, the country, may voluntarily offer him fabulous wealth from her own coffers to divulge his secret knowledge, and may even involve herself in a crushing debt in order to do so. Or A may be simply a producer of corn, and B an impecunious starving man begging corn of A because he needs it as food. In the latter case, short of an act of immorality

or one involving the certainty of B's immediate injury or demise, there is scarcely anything the law forbids A from exacting from B. The service may involve B's gradual injury. To this the law says nothing. The service may be debasing or degrading from an intellectual or spiritual point of view; it may deteriorate B's eyesight, impair his physique or his good spirits: to all these things the law says nothing.

While the service is being performed and B is obtaining corn from A, B who cannot pay cash for the corn, may be asked to do pretty well anything, with the gloomy alternative before him of going without corn altogether. This I take it is the meaning of the word violence in the mouth of the Socialist and Communist: it is the power that one man can exercise over another, in determining his occupation and in exacting service or else withholding food from him.

The Socialist would admit that service must be exacted from all at some time or other, but he suggests that the State should exact it, so that the power may be exercised corporately, and the profit, if any, allotted, not to individuals, but to the whole body. The extent to which an element of violence adheres even to the proposition that the State should exact service and not the individual, would be an interesting speculation; for the fact that some violence still remains implicit in the proposition everybody will see at a glance. But the present writer hopes to point to other means by which violence must inevitably enter into the Socialistic State, just as forcibly as it does now into any well ordered capitalistic State.

Quite apart then from the violence which is inherent in the proposition that the State must exact service under the Socialistic régime, it is suggested that no one, who has been following the analysis of the Socialist and Communist's first principles given above, can up to the present be satisfied that violence would be eliminated from society under their régime any more than it can be under the present régime, and for the following reasons :

So far the Socialist's proposals appear to contain no measures for ridding human stock of its pronounced inequalities. It is, however, from inequalities that apparent injustices and violence ultimately arise.

Men of great talent and men of the most miserable endowments, will continue to be born in any State, whether Socialistic or capitalistic. So long as the individual right to procreate be admitted there will continue to be pressed into the community, not only the offspring of the virtuous man, the sage, and the craftsman, but also the offspring of the knave, the mediocre and the fool. So long as the individual's right to parenthood is accepted as inviolable, society will therefore continue to be perturbed as it is now by an uninvited access of one, two or even half a dozen to a dozen, new mouths, from certain individuals, the low quality of whose accompanying bodies may be out of all proportion (in regard to the services they can render) to the high quantity of food and other supplies they can account for. New members will be forced into the community by procreation which, according to the quality of

their endowments will either considerably enhance its efficiency or considerably cripple it. If they are to enhance it, and it is in the interest of the community that they should enhance it, then they will require to be encouraged for so doing; on the other hand, if they are going to cripple it, their crippling influence will recoil on each member of the social body, and each will suffer from the presence of the new arrivals.

Further to elucidate this point, let two extreme examples be given:—

(1). A man of singularly high gifts, C by name, presses upon the community in his lifetime eight children all of which take more or less after him. Their endowments are so conspicuous that they plainly overshadow all the other higher men of the community. It happens, moreover, that the community has reached a crisis in its affairs when it urgently needs men of C's type. Obviously then C, by presenting the community with eight singularly gifted replicas of himself, has profoundly affected its life and its constitution. By elevating the standard of the administrative work, some of the whilom administrators will have been driven from office and forced to take up an inferior form of service. A perturbation will have occurred. In its ultimate analysis it will have amounted to a coercive act, an act which though tolerated by the State (assumed in this case to admit the individual's right to procreate) thus turns out to be an act of violence. It was not deliberate, or of a kind savouring of malice aforethought, but it is nevertheless an act which forces a change on the community at large, and a marked change of position on a

certain number of the community's members. It is therefore tantamount to an act of violence: it is in fact an act of violence.

(2) Now suppose the case of a man who is the butt of everybody's ridicule for his stubborn stupidity and intractable indolence. Suppose his condition of utter unworthiness, from the intellectual and moral point of view, to be moreover aggravated by poor health. This man, too, we presume, claiming by law the right of parenthood, forces upon the community half-a-dozen new members in the form of his offspring, who are so far like him that the competent authority can scarcely cover the cost of their clothes and food by the produce of their labours, and has to encroach upon other resources of the State in order to provide for them. Here again we have a profound perturbation, resulting from the pressing of a new set of members upon the community by the act of procreation. Nobody asked for them, nobody wanted them. But now they have come, everybody has to work a little more or a little longer in order to provide for them. In its ultimate analysis this is once more a coercive act, an act which, though tolerated by the State that admits the individual's right to parenthood, thus turns out to be an act of violence. It certainly was not deliberate, or designed particularly to harass the community; but it forces an extra burden on the social body, it is therefore tantamount to an act of violence: it is in fact an act of violence.

Now here we have two extreme instances of violence entering a socialistic society against which it would appear to be impossible

to take any preventive measures.* And how did the violence enter?—In the same way as it enters all life, all Nature, all societies: through the act of procreation. Between the two extreme cases given the imaginative reader will easily be able to supply a vast number of intermediate cases, which though perhaps less powerful in the ultimate violence of their effect on the community would nevertheless partake each in its way of the nature of violence.

The act of procreation is thus an act which in the long run amounts to a means of pressing any number from one to a dozen (sometimes more) of new members upon a community, which members may, in one way or another, cause a profound perturbation of the balance of that community.

The act of procreation is, therefore, an act of violence, of trespass, of invasion. The

* The present writer has purposely avoided reducing the violence to an act of depredation in regard to food, air and space; although in a steadily increasing community, which is the only healthy community, surrounded by other steadily increasing communities, this aspect of the question would have to be taken into account. In such a community every baby born may rightly be said to constitute a menace to every other baby's food, air and space. Nor has any mention been made of the multiplication of people who become a burden to the rest of the community by the sheer inferiority of their physique. But again in their case provision would have to be made by the administrators of a Socialistic State, just as it is made by capitalistic States; and the parents of such physically inferior people would thus, by the act of procreation alone, have pressed a burden upon their fellow citizens which would virtually amount to an act of violence against them. Though the parents of such physically inferior people might scruple to put their hands in their fellow members' pockets for food or money, by means of their offspring they thus indirectly perpetrate a predatory act against them.

continuity of a species in Nature is secured by procreation ; but the balance of Nature is constantly made to fluctuate around a mean by the act, notwithstanding loss from predatory and other causes.

In human society the continuity of the species is secured by procreation ; but since reciprocal destruction does not occur to nearly the same extent among human beings as it does among the lower animals*, in a healthy society, which is an increasing society, the balance of the community, far from fluctuating around a mean, tends to be thrown ever more seriously out with each successive generation.

Thus in a healthy society, which is an increasing society, procreation is not merely a transitory but a perpetual source of violence.

The present writer is not arguing that this is right or wrong ; he is only trying to state a fact. Whether it be a pleasant fact, or a desirable fact, is for the moment beside the point. It is at all events a fundamental truth of life, and as such it would be idle to devise any new scheme of society in which it is not allowed for.

It may be objected that the whole of a man's offspring in modern society may elude their destiny of impinging violently against that society by becoming emigrants.

This appears to be forcible enough. But is not emigration in itself merely a means of postponing the act of violence by one stage ? Besides, is not emigration—say to the colonies—possible to-day only because we happen to

* There are reasons for believing that Socialists promise to make it cease altogether among human beings.

be living at a period subsequent to an act of violence on a grand scale, by which the land constituting the colonies, whether of France, England, Holland, or Italy, was wrested from other people? And even so, have we not seen recently, during a time of serious unemployment in England, certain politicians object to Mr. Lloyd George's schemes of emigration on the ground that, to send our unemployed to Canada, Australia, or New Zealand, where labour conditions were also unfavourable, would be an act of provocation to those colonies?—Why an act of provocation?—Because to impose a number of extra mouths on a community unless there is a genuine industrial demand in that community for the able bodies possessing those mouths, is an act of gratuitous violence.

It serves no purpose to revile life and the world because we happen to have lighted upon a fundamental fact that is unpleasant to our cultivated sensibilities. Life is as it is, and Nature is as it is, and no bewailing or reviling on our parts will alter them. The brave attitude, the healthy attitude, indeed the only dignified attitude, is to accept life and Nature as they are, and to endeavour to discover the most desirable method of dealing with both of them.

This primary act of violence, which is procreation, cannot be cancelled out or annulled; it cannot be expunged from the essential character of existence. It must be accepted. This much, however, should be immediately understood; *you cannot have at the very portals of life an act of violence, and hope to build upon it a form of society in which violence in some form, however attenuated,*

will not appear. To make any promises to this effect is the plainest humbug. It may appear an alluring prospect; it may sound an attractive picture; it may deceive and it may delude; but it is an impossible undertaking notwithstanding; and those who declare that they are prepared to embark upon it are either too ill-informed to realise the true data of their problem, too dishonest to admit that they know these true data, or too inept properly to deal with them.

Starting out then with this original act of violence which is rooted in life and in Nature and enters into every form of human society willy nilly, it is obvious that its reverberations must proceed rhythmically throughout all the sections of any human community whatsoever, be its organisation what you will. Thus inequalities, apparent injustices and even bondage, appear only as the necessary ultimate repercussions of the original perturbing influence. And in every society hitherto, such regrettable repercussions of the original act of violence have always been regarded as inevitable. As a rule the authorities have, according to their lights, endeavoured to mitigate the asperity of these perturbations; but to eliminate them completely they have always known is an impossible achievement, *because they are not man-made, but created by the laws of life itself.*

All societies hitherto appear to have recognised with varying degrees of liberality the sacredness of man's right over his procreative powers. But what a large number of recent sociological thinkers appear to have forgotten is, that since procreation and its

consequences are part of the original elements of life and nature, which are allowed to persist in the more or less artificial arrangement called society, this artificial arrangement must partake of the harshness, the inequalities and the apparent injustices of life and nature, to the extent to which it allows these original elements of life and nature to operate freely in its midst. To check procreation, or limit it by law, would involve the violation of the sanctity which has hitherto been accepted as the one attribute shielding every man's right over his procreative powers.*

Acquiescing in the inviolability of this right, then, the utmost society could do, was to mitigate the worst consequences of its free operation, by ordering as far as possible the union of couples, and by properly allocating the general burden of responsibility for the support of the offspring arising from these unions.

Albeit no amount of order introduced into the joining of couples, could possibly place a check upon man's procreative powers when once he had fulfilled all the formalities that the State demanded; consequently, despite all its attempts to regulate the relations of the sexes, society's ultimate control over the act of procreation and its results remain more or less ineffectual, and in so far as it attempts to establish any reasonable proportion between a man's

*The wisdom of ancient societies in never checking or limiting this right is now becoming more than ever apparent in the light that psycho-analysis has thrown upon the disastrous effects of interfering too drastically with this function in human beings.

powers of procreating and his powers of providing for the consequences of his act—or for that matter his children's power of providing for themselves in after life—the outcome of all society's efforts have been practically nil.

Evidently mankind seems to have come to the conclusion fairly early in the history of civilisation that if there is one kind of interference, one kind of control or of constraint that his fellows can with difficulty brook, it is that which would presume to meddle with their right over their procreative powers. But the consequences of this attitude in regard to so vital a function as procreation should not be overlooked by shallow political thinkers and other romanticists. This consequence, which cannot be repeated too often, is *that with the free operation of the right to parenthood every society hitherto has incorporated in its organisation a piece of life and nature, raw and unmitigated by any softening influence.* And, having done this, it cannot hope to eliminate from its organisation that modicum of violence, harshness and inexorability which attaches to the free operation of all natural and vital laws.

The lack of candour and bravery in the Socialist's and Communist's position, is that they do not refer to this basic natural element in all human societies, and furthermore that they propose a form of society in which this basic natural element is not even reckoned with.

For it must be clear that to hope on such a basis to build up a social structure that will be all mutual help, mutual give and take,

and mutual good will—quite apart from the known character of human beings—is simply romantic reverie ; and in refusing to recognise that more than three-quarters of the apparent injustices, asperities and disabilities of human society, are the inevitable repercussions upon individuals of the incessant working of the primitive act of violence at the base of the social edifice, the proclaimer and preacher of a Utopia free from violence publishes broadcast either his own ineptitude or his own dishonesty.

But this is not the only form in which the dishonesty of Socialist and Communist propaganda manifests itself. For the Socialist and Communist not only refuse to recognise the violence inherent in the consequences of the free operation of the right to parenthood, they also lay to the score of man's legislation the injustices and inequalities which are clearly the outcome of that right alone.

In all societies, however wisely controlled and directed, there are certain to be thousands of malcontents. Those malcontents who owe their position of failure, obscurity, or impotence to circumstances over which no organised community ever has had or ever can have control, are however easily won over to an attack upon society, if they can be shown by unscrupulous or incompetent thinkers that their position is due, not to an essential law of life or nature, but to the peculiar conventions or rules regulating the community of which they happen to form a part. Men who are congenitally inefficient, beneath even mediocre attainments in their intelligence, their physical strength or their health, very naturally find

themselves relegated to inferior responsibilities, subordinate places and menial tasks. In any community in which there is a high appreciation of quality, or a conscious effort towards good qualitative results—and no other community is worth considering—this must be so.

Now nothing is easier, nevertheless, than to convince this class of malcontents that their subordinate positions and menial tasks are the result of a social rather than of a natural injustice, and the dishonesty of Communistic propaganda, consists very largely in the fact that it will not scruple to delude this class of malcontents into believing that in a perfectly realisable ideal state of society their disabilities would be removed. Nay, it goes further than that, it adds to the small list of remediable injustices which are really of man's creating, the long list of gross injustices which are the work of life and nature, and flinging the whole sum of these injustices at the head of society, leads the ignorant and the thoughtless to believe that the grand total of the account can legitimately be charged against man and his institutions.

And this brings us to the next step in the argument.

So far we have seen :—

(a). That procreation acts as a perturbing force in society, and that in its consequences it is therefore an act of violence.

(b). That tradition and recent investigation lead us to believe that it is not advisable to meddle with the individual's sacred right over his procreative powers.

(c). That therefore in any community where

the individual's right to parenthood is regarded as inviolable, violence must reverberate throughout the whole social structure and in its repercussions must impinge with more or less severity against individuals.

The next step in the argument is the consequence of (c) and it is that where there is violence, however slight or however carefully regulated, its results must redound with more or less severity to the disadvantage of certain individuals, that is to say, *there must be someone or some group that suffers*. And this appears to be another of the fundamental social truths without allowing for which it seems hopeless to set forth to rebuild society.

To deny it may sound pleasant, kind, humane, charitable, and chivalrous ; but it is not candid ; and although to the ignorant, to the sentimental and the thoughtless, that which is pleasant frequently makes the appeal of truth itself, in the end that man or party who is not straightforward about these matters is bound to be discovered and reviled.

Those therefore who wish to reform all future societies, and who wish to make it unnecessary for sufferers or suffering to exist in the world, except at the will of the legislature, can do so only in one of two ways.* Either they must close the backdoor through which the violence of nature and life enters the community—that backdoor being the free operation of the right to parenthood—

* Sufferers and suffering are to be understood here as of a kind which the inequalities of life and nature alone bring about—not the sufferers and suffering resulting from ordinary human passions and the accidents of their manifestation : love, hate, indifference, childlessness, spinsterhood, etc. ; for it is presumed that no reformer has ever been so foolish as to pretend that he could eliminate these.

or else they must do what no society hitherto has ventured to do, *i.e.*, they must determine by law beforehand who is and who is not to be sacrificed.

The suffering which in society is the necessary outcome of the act of violence which is procreation, that suffering which is the only means of balancing this violence, does not necessarily fall on the heads of all. It selects its victims as it were with a certain caprice. And hitherto, while endeavouring to mitigate the severity of it as far as possible, society has been content to leave its incidence more or less to chance, to the blind forces which ultimately determine, as they do in nature, the fate of all individual beings.

It is only in war time, when the kind of person to be sacrificed for the whole is definitely indicated, that society proceeds by legislation to select those who should suffer from those who should be spared. And even then, a certain element of chance remains over by means of which it is possible for large numbers of young men to escape the ultimate price.

If, however, it is proposed to reform society so that it shall either contain no violence, or that the effects of that violence shall be annulled for the majority by legislative means, then whatever the Socialist or Communist may have to say to the contrary, this can be done only in one of two ways:

(a) Either man's right to parenthood must be violated.

(b) Or the section of society which is to be sacrificed to balance the original act of violence must be deliberately decided upon by legislative means.

And since these are the only two alternatives, the Socialist, the Communist, and the Bolshevist, are just as hopelessly committed to them as any other advocate of a new social scheme, from which the inequalities and injustices inseparable from all human communities heretofore are to be absent.

The fact that they are impossible alternatives invalidates the whole of the Socialist and Communist's position.

To promise a Utopia from which inequalities and injustices will have been removed, without stating frankly that one or the other of the above alternatives is necessary, is therefore the acme of dishonesty; and in this respect the present writer has reluctantly to admit that the Socialist, Communist and Bolshevist, whether from ignorance, ineptitude or design, appear to be radically dishonest.

It has been shown, however, that their dishonesty does not stop at this. In addition they fasten the few remediable injustices which are of man's own creating, on to the grosser and more flagrant injustices in modern society which are only the inevitable repercussions from the original act of violence we have been examining, and then proceed to declare that the whole sum of injustices are of man's own making. This is their greatest perfidy, their most misleading and most dexterous feat of *legerdemain*. The ignorant and the thoughtless are very naturally deceived, and it is always too late when they discover how clumsily and how cruelly they have been deceived.

It has been pointed out that it is an indispensable portion of life and of nature which

in all our societies introduces the element of violence and leads to inequalities and injustices ; but this aspect of the matter is the darkest and most displeasing that could possibly have been put forward, and in dealing with it first the present writer has postponed to the end of the discussion the more grateful duty of considering it on its more valuable and deeply attractive side.

True in its repercussions it leads to some of the chief asperities of human life ; but is it not accountable for most of humanity's principal joys as well ? On its shadow side it may appear harsh, but seriously would we have it otherwise ? And are not those who pretend that it can be otherwise merely romanticists who want all life to be the perpetual white glare of a noonday sun without any shadow ?

Consider, to begin with, the sanctity of the individual's right over his procreative powers. How many of humanity's finest emotions and most treasured virtues arise out of it ? This is not sentiment, but psychological fact. And what does society expect to become if it succeeds in suppressing the source of these virtues and emotions ? How many sober-minded men, actually faced with one of the two alternatives stated above, as the essential first measure to the establishment of a Utopia without violence or accidental suffering, would give that Utopia a second thought ?

There is nothing the present writer deprecates more sincerely than an appeal to the emotions alone. He is aware that in the above paragraph he has made a frank appeal to the emotions. But surely in this particular instance it is amply justified ? Having made

his principal intellectual appeal, he now confronts his readers with the aesthetic aspect of the alternatives proposed. For is not life and the enjoyment of life largely a question of aesthetics? Is not our emotional nature competent therefore to decide upon a question of taste or pleasure? Life offers many alternatives; human life presents hundreds of possibilities. In the end it is our emotional nature and our aesthetic sense that decide which road leads to the greatest amount of happiness, although the intellect may have directed us all along. Can we really suppose then, that a change that can cut at the root of so much virtue and so much traditional sentiment, can possibly be one that is going to bring us happiness?

And even in its inevitable repercussions—the inequalities and injustices of which so much has been said above—has the free operation of the individual's right to parenthood not also immense advantages?

In nature it is the violence and inexorable character of the forces at play that give life its manifold beauties and contrasts, the mountains and the valleys, the rivers and the lakes, the tableland and the gorge, the forest and the open plain. In the animal world it is the difference between the tiger and the antelope, the vulture and the hare, the lion and the jackal, that lends to life that panoramic charm of variegated virtue and adaptation to ends. While in the domain of plants it is the divergences of the oak from the shrub, of the palm from the cactus, of the poplar from the plum tree, that combine to produce that harmony and dissonance which the landscape painter converts into graphic music.

Is it now contended that in human society we can dispense with inequalities and injustices without also sacrificing three-quarters of its beauties? Apart altogether from the fact that it is utterly impossible to achieve this end, would it be desirable? How much of the joy of life does not spring from the thirst and thrill of adventure, from the consciousness of being an individual trying to establish one's right of citizenship among people who are sufficiently unlike one (*unequal to one*) to introduce an element of uncertainty, of sport if you will, into the undertaking? How much of the charm of life does not arise from the vast repertory of different powers and virtues which inequality alone makes possible? A beautiful medal has its reverse side. And is not so-called injustice merely the reverse side of the medal of inequality? The multifariousness which lends social life its variety and its incidents, the pronounced divergences from life which give it its light and its shade: all these things have hitherto constituted the essential conditions out of which the thing we know as human society has grown. Even if we could alter these conditions we cannot even picture the kind of result we should obtain. We know of no society wherein inequalities and their consequent injustices do not exist. We cannot imagine such a society.

This is not empty imagery and grandiloquent sentiment, it is the plainest truth. It is impossible to conceive of a society at all unless we presuppose among its members the presence of those particularly happy results of inequality which are higher men. Even the lowest forms of gregariousness—the wolf

pack and the herd of antelopes—benefit from this kind of inequality by the function that it enables their leaders to perform. For a society implies cohesion, it implies unity of purpose and desire ; it also implies a more or less uniform outlook on life. But how are these things possible without higher men ? When in the history of the world have these results been achieved without the help of superior beings ? But the idea of something superior immediately suggests inequality, and inequality right down to the lowest man ; but with this inequality we must as we have seen accept so-called injustices and consequently suffering.

To inveigh against the necessary consequences of life is not to open a " class war," as the Socialist and Communist claim to have done, but to open war against life itself ; and this conclusion supplies me with the terms of my last charge against them.

The Socialist and Communist do not really know their true objective ; they do not really know against whom they are marching and levelling their attacks. In addition to being dishonest, therefore, they are utterly confused.

It is life itself that causes the chief among the grievances that they propose to redress, and thus their description of their campaign as a class war is the outcome of a most complete misunderstanding.

They are the advocates of a principle of death, or putting it more mildly, at least of a movement hostile to life, and they do not know it and never have known it. Their banners are sewn with false and meaningless devices calculated to delude only the ignorant

and the thoughtless, and they are not even frank about the necessary logical conclusions of their own first principles. If they really wish to put an end to violence in human society, they would sew on their foremost banner the device : " Down with procreation."

This might prove unpopular, it might even sound less alluring than " Down with the bourgeoisie ! " but at least it would be honest and might help them to achieve their real aim.

The present writer does not suggest that the mass of the people of England or France understand the real errors in the Socialist and Communist's position. He does not even believe that when once these errors have been made known to them they will be able to grasp or understand them ; but certainly the capacity which very large numbers of them are showing for resisting the seductive appeal of these so-called " class-war " doctrines, points to a certain instinctive insight on their part which does them credit, and may possibly be a sign that they are moved by a vague, but none the less powerful, suspicion that all is not as golden as it glitters in the Socialistic creed, and therefore that there is still a chance for those who would win them back to a wisely controlled capitalism, and to a future in which reform rather than revolution is the general programme.

* * * * *

Is the case against Socialism as strong as this ? Is there really nothing to be said for the position that the Socialist and Communist assume ?—Certainly there is nothing to be said for it. Then what gives it its seductive plausibility ? What is it that makes three-

quarters of those who have interested reasons for opposing it, suspect in their heart of hearts that Socialism and Communism may be right after all ?

Those among the possessing classes who, while opposing active Socialist propaganda, yet believe in their heart of hearts that Socialism is right, are usually as confused as the Socialists and Communists themselves, and as incapable of tracing political propositions back to first principles. They make the same mistakes as the Socialists, and confound life and nature's injustices with the remediable injustices which are the outcome of human legislation, and after adding the two together charge the whole sum to the account of society or civilisation.

They belong to the class of thoughtless people who are in the habit of saying in the face of every impending reform good or bad, "The thing must come"; and their attitude of forestalled acquiescence offers so little opposition, that as a rule the thing to which they refer *does* come.

But the reason why the claims and proposals of the Socialist and Communist succeed in displaying a certain modicum of plausibility is not because, on examination, they impel the inquirer to agreement; for, as we have seen, the more thoroughly they are investigated, the more impossible does it become to accept them; it is rather because in modern European society certain unnecessarily gross evils which are truly the creation of man and which seem to lend a colourable warrant to the revolutionist's position, are too glaring to be overlooked.

We have seen that where there is violence

some one or some group must ultimately be victimised or sacrificed. This does not necessarily involve death or annihilation, it may simply amount to failure, failure to hold their own.

Now it is the first duty of rulers, as we have seen, to watch vigilantly that the violence is not of man's making, for that can be helped, but only of life's making, for that cannot be helped. The second duty of rulers, however, most certainly is to assuage as far as possible the asperities resulting from the violence that is life's making.

Charles I. was an ideal monarch in this respect; not only did he suppress fraud, profiteering, and the exploitation of the poorer classes, all means by which violence of man's making breaks loose in society; but he also sheltered those whom natural disaster had overtaken.*

Now the gross evils of modern European society which lend a colourable warrant to the otherwise absurd proposals of the Communist and Socialist, are the multifarious deeds of violence of man's making, that have been allowed to break loose on the community.

Among those deeds of violence we may mention :

(1) Sweating.

(2) The act of inviting the proletariat to engage in unhealthy occupations, frequently resulting in permanent ill-health or premature death.

(3) Profiteering and the turning of any form of temporary distress to advantage.

* This I have demonstrated with sufficient detail elsewhere. See my *Defence of Aristocracy*, Chapter IV.

(4) Speculating in the first necessities of life.

(5) Unwise and wasteful disposal of property after death: as for instance for the support of cranky and faddist societies, of useless and non-productive people in unnecessary affluence; the endowment of institutions that have a degenerating effect on the general standard of health of the nation.

(6) Class cleavage and snobbery.

(7) The encouragement by the legislature of the growth of large urban centres, and the ill-health and general unwholesomeness of the poorer quarters of such centres.

(8) The purveying of inferior food to the masses, and of food that is not strictly life-supporting, such as vegetable margarine, dried fruit and vegetables, adulterated beer, tinned foods of all kinds (except possibly tinned tomatoes), dirty milk and adulterated bread.

(9) The lack of protection afforded to the masses against: (a) usurious money lending (a penny a week per shilling is not uncommon), (b) pollution and demoralisation through inferior and pernicious literature, (c), pollution and demoralisation through alien immigration.

(10) The failure to impart to the masses by means of education any thorough grasp of any branch of knowledge which might ennoble their outlook, add dignity to their characters, and lend support to their self-esteem.

In addition to all this, not a single item of which deals with any evil that is not susceptible of reform, it should be borne in mind that modern western civilisation has in some way failed so miserably to mould her values

so that the successful in life's struggle should in all cases be the most virtuous, the most intelligent, and the most desirable, in the minds of tasteful people, that a certain stigma now attaches to the materially successful—particularly those who have attained material success in commerce and industry—which cannot be said to be altogether unmerited, and which the Communist and Socialist naturally exploit to the utmost in their propaganda.

The greatest indictment of modern society is perhaps the frequency with which vulgarity and the meanest attainments in virtue and intellect achieve phenomenal material success ; and since this is the outcome of values, and the laws governing commerce and industry, it is obvious that in this direction reforms must be effected, if the Communist and Socialist are to be deprived of the small amount of validity which appears to attach to their sweeping condemnation of society and civilisation.

On the other hand, while we have seen that the original act of violence at the base of all society, must lead to suffering somewhere and somewhen, the characteristic about modern western civilisation which lends so much colour to the Socialist and Communist's schemes, is the frequency with which this suffering seems to be borne by people who are by no means the unworthiest in the community.

The values of modern society have become so vulgar and mercenary that again and again it happens that the section of the social body which the chance play of forces selects for sacrifice, is superior to the section which is

spared, and which not infrequently wields the most power in the community.

Thus it is not the suffering in modern society that lends support to the so-called class-war doctrines; for as we have seen suffering of some kind is inevitable where there is inequality and injustice; but it is the fact that the suffering in question often falls upon the most desirable members of the community, or at least upon those who are capable of the greatest virtue and the greatest industry, and this is the outcome purely of the vulgarity and coarseness of our values which are quite as susceptible to modification and reform as any other man-made feature of our lives.

The fact that after all these reforms, however, there will still remain a residuum of violence in all civilisation, which it will be impossible altogether to eliminate, so long as nations recognise the individual's inviolable right to parenthood, should nevertheless be carefully remembered and reckoned with; for, both as a check upon any too romantic schemes of our own, as well as a means with which to criticise our enemies' proposals, the recollection of this unpleasant but ineluctable principle is one of the most valuable measures of caution by which it is possible for us to abide; and he who, by forgetting it, fancies he has discovered a royal road to his Utopia, will find perhaps too late that life, nature and society are not easily made the sport of false ideals and shallow fantasies, but are ruled by inexorable and frequently unpleasant laws the rigour of which it is safer to acknowledge than to ignore.

CHAPTER VI

EDUCATION

“ A city can be virtuous only when the citizens who have a share in the government are virtuous, and in our state all the citizens share in the government.”—ARISTOTLE (Politics. Bk. VII., 13).

EDUCATION, as organised by the state, can have but one object—the rearing of people who are fit to be decent and worthy citizens. A man may educate himself privately in vice, in jazzing, in motoring, or in crime; he is at liberty to do this at his own expense and in his own time; but if he is educated at the expense of his fellow-men, the intention of these fellow-men must be to train him into a desirable member of society. Only thus can the huge outlay be made worth while.

Now a desirable citizen is above all a well conducted citizen. He may know French and fencing, and be able to beat all comers at billiards or biology, marbles or mathematics; but he is only a nuisance if he is not, in addition, well conducted—that is to say, reliable, sensible, understanding, and honest. It is more important that he should thoroughly grasp the first principles of sound conduct and thought, than that he should know the whole of counterpoint or conchology.

When once he has mastered the first principles of sound conduct and thought, he is prepared to do well at anything, ac-

ording to his gifts; whereas the most exhaustive knowledge of counterpoint and conchology will, in the most favourable circumstances, only make him a good musician or a good classifier of shells.

In short, happiness and harmony are more easily achieved by a people holding deep and sound views concerning Life and Humanity, than by people deeply versed in science, and top-heavy with information. Happiness has been achieved again and again upon earth by people possessing not a billionth part of the knowledge that has been accumulated by modern man. A sound instinct in regard to food, a correct understanding of one's self and one's fellows, and a decent appreciation of the limits of individual caprice in a social community, are, after all, more precious than a large accumulation of facts. And thus education, if it is to be valuable, should consist very much more in a training in manners, sound views, and means of intercourse, than in the acquisition of knowledge about facts.*

All adults know how very few of the facts they learned at school are ever remembered in later life, and how only those elements of the scholastic curriculum are turned to practical account, or even remembered, which come into daily use throughout life.

* Even John Locke, who, as a thinker was, in many respects, surprisingly superficial, exclaims with regard to education: "You will wonder, perhaps, that I put learning last, especially if I tell you I think it the least part." (*Some Thoughts concerning Education*). While Aristotle lays it down definitely: "That there is a sort of education in which parents should train their sons, not as being useful or necessary, but because it is liberal or noble." (*Politics VIII., 5*).

Thus, a boy of the working classes may remember a little elementary arithmetic and a little geography—apart from that, all he recalls is the trick of reading, because he practises it every day of the year.

Now, since the masses of the people form the bulk of the nation, and are ultimately the determining factor in the nation's character and achievements, nothing could possibly be more important than working-class education. State education of the masses, therefore, offers the finest opportunity that the legislature could obtain, to express its concern about the nation's welfare, and to secure that welfare by inculcating upon everyone, except the minority constituting the well-to-do, who cannot matter nearly as much, decent manners, sound views, and a proper, adequate means of intercourse.

It is certainly one of the most ugly features of our elementary education in this country, that manners—which ought to be the first among the foremost objects of all education—are entirely omitted from the curriculum. As if, forsooth, it were better for master Tommy and his sister Jane, to know of the existence of the trade winds, than to know how to behave when an adult addresses them! In this way the legislature imposes quite an unnecessary burden of discomfort and sorrow upon the poor, because without good manners life is made so very much more difficult and wretched, and so very much less smooth and harmonious. How the idea of education ever came to be divorced from manners, it is hard to explain; but that it has been thus divorced is unquestionable. The consequences of this gross

initial error fall with greater severity upon the poor, or the masses, than upon the rich ; perhaps that is why so little is done to correct it. The reason of this unfair incidence of the evils resulting from a lack of manners, is not, however, due to the fact that the rich are necessarily good mannered, or better educated in manners than the poor ; for there is ample evidence to the contrary ; but that the lack of manners of the rich is not so keenly felt by those in their immediate circle, because they live in larger rooms, larger houses, larger areas, and they are thus able to get away from one another's bad manners—an escape which is denied the poor.

But while no attention is given to manners in elementary education, it must not be supposed that training in sound views, whether concerning Life or Humanity, is the subject of more careful attention. Apart from copy-book maxims, nothing whatever is done for the masses of the people in this matter. It is true that the Church and its teaching are supposed to cover precisely this ground in the mental upbringing of the nation, but even if we admit that the Church is capable of teaching sound views concerning Life and Humanity, how many of the working classes still believe in Christianity to-day ? How many of them believe so fervently as to insist upon their children observing all the tenets of Christianity ? Moreover, it is only fair to judge this department of education by its fruits. Where is the evidence at present, after generations of Church teaching, that the mass of the people have been taught any views at all

about Life and Humanity—not to mention sound views?

At all events, this is obviously a factor in education that ought never to have been left to an independent and uncontrolled body—particularly a religious body. It ought to have been included as an essential element in any scheme of secular education that was devised. What, indeed, could be more important than the necessity of imparting to your growing citizen sound views about himself, his kind, society, and life in general? What could be more vital in the formation of his character, his outlook, and the moulding of his ultimate conduct? It scarcely requires to be pointed out, however, that, like manners, this is a factor in education which the State schools leave entirely aside.

People will tell you that there is no time for such a branch of learning. *No time*—to attend to one of the most important prerequisites of a sound education!

It would be a mistake to suppose, however, that the wealthy and well-to-do classes are any better off than the poor in this respect. On the whole, they are a little worse off. For, while the children of the working classes are sufficiently in touch with life's realities to have a number of fundamental truths forced upon their attention, the children of the wealthy and well-to-do classes live in an atmosphere so perfectly truth-proof, so far removed from life's realities, and their schools do so little to correct the benighting influence of their homes, that there is probably no creature on earth more hopelessly devoid of sound views on any subject than the public schoolboy of seven-

teen. Everything has been done, no pains have been spared, to inculcate upon him every false doctrine and valuation of which the present age can boast.

In a complicated society like ours, the means of intercourse in education cover practically everything that does not come under the head of "vocational training." Men and women must know how to understand other people and how to make themselves understood. They must know how to count money, how to read and comprehend a letter or a book, and command such general information as will protect them from deception, from going astray, or from otherwise failing to hold their own among their fellow beings.

Now it is precisely in this department that the State education of England really does pretend to accomplish all that is desired; and yet nowhere is the inadequacy of its achievement more conspicuous. We have seen that it does not even pretend to teach manners, and that it does not claim to inculcate sound views upon the masses whom it professes to educate; but it does claim to teach them the means of intercourse. Countless millions are spent upon this instruction annually. Hundreds of thousands of children are bored to stultification while they are supposed to be acquiring it, and the net result is that 99 out of 100 of them neither know how to understand other people, nor how to make themselves understood. They do not even know how to understand what they read. And nothing is done to equip them in this all-important branch of knowledge.

Anybody would have thought that one of the first concerns of any educational body dealing with "national" education would have been to secure to all citizens of the same nation, irrespective of rank, at least a thorough knowledge of their native tongue. For what, indeed, could be more vital? It is the first pre-requisite of all satisfactory communication, whether from or to the subject; it is the first essential weapon of the rational faculties. A particular native language may have faults and shortcomings as compared with other native languages; it may be poorer in words, more complicated in syntax, less copiously supplied with racy idiom, etc., but surely any national scheme of education that fails to make the mastery of this native language—such as it is, perfect or imperfect—the foremost object on its programme, is guilty of a gross dereliction of duty. For whatever its faults may be, the masses, at least, have no other means of communication, and if they are going to be made articulate, they must be taught their native tongue.

At present the situation of the English working classes is in this respect, pathetic in its helpless and infantile humility. Their talk is the babble of babes, their vocabulary the means of expression for creatures whose feelings and thoughts are no more complicated than those of primitive savages. Not only are they incapable of understanding complex states of feeling or complex thoughts when they hear them accurately and carefully expressed, but they are also utterly unable to give expression to at least three-quarters of their own thoughts and emotions.

In regard to a very large number of thoughts and emotions, which, to the cultivated man, are commonplace matters, the masses of England are therefore literally inarticulate. The same word answers for a hundred meanings in their conversation, all of which it but inadequately expresses; while for those emotions and thoughts for which they have no words, there can exist only mute and mystified suspicion.

This is bad enough. Life is sufficiently tragic for millions of creatures to-day, without its being either necessary or desirable to aggravate it with the additional affliction of dumbness. And yet the fact that this inarticulateness, which ignorance imposes, is equivalent to dumbness, or at least to partial dumbness, is surely incontestable.

But there is a consequence of this ignorance which is even more serious than that discussed above. And that is the danger to which it exposes its sufferers of falling under false guidance, misdirection and pollution from outside. Whereas dumbness, although a sad affliction, is often merely another form of constraint; misunderstanding, misinterpretation, or the inability to criticise and to reject the expressed thoughts of others, may be a source of pollution, a source of grave error, and a speedy means of complete and incurable perversion.

If people are to be protected from misconceptions, false leaders, demagogues, and all those smart and slippery unemployed who are ever ready to exploit ignorance, and take advantage of simplicity, they must be in a position to listen critically to an address or an appeal made to them in their

own language. They must be in a position to tell to what extent their proposed leader or misleader understands what he is talking about. How much false sentiment, false doctrine, inflammatory teaching, is simply an abuse of language, a forcing of terms, in fact, catachresis! How much of it would be detected and exposed, if the majority of the nation possessed that precision and understanding in the use of words, which would come with a proper knowledge of their native tongue.

To-day the man who is ever ready to mislead, to confuse, and to inflame, the minds of ignorant people, encounters no check, no critical scrutiny of his pronouncements, for his listeners are hardly able to understand correctly the simplest words he uses. The temptation, therefore, to use language loosely and even unscrupulously is as powerful as it is repeatedly unresisted.

The huge and flatulent press, that has grown up within the last fifty years, cares as little for accuracy of expression, or for sober precision in language, as it cares for any other ideal which formerly seemed worth striving after. The power of the press is enormous. It guides opinion, it influences the hearts of the people, it has the united effort of nations under its direction; and yet where does it show any signs of being chastened by the awful duties which, it is true, it may never deliberately have intended to shoulder at the outset of its career?

The traditions of the Middle Ages, at least, included certain principles which led to the protection of the poorer and more ignorant classes; the Church of the Middle

Ages also protected the poor and the ignorant according to its lights. It may be questioned, however, whether this new force, the press, has as yet even considered the function of protecting the ignorant as among its most sacred privileges. And by this protection there is no intention here to imply a conspiracy to withhold truth from the uncultivated, or to distort facts for their digestion; what is meant is that necessary vigilance and caution which, if observed by all editors and publishers of journals and periodical literature, would induce them to regard as a public crime, as an unsocial act, the inculcation upon those who are ill-equipped for self-guidance, of any notions, sentiments, or points of view concerning life and human relationships that were not sound, proper, or healthy—not to mention noble.

Unlike that other force, the Church, the press was ushered in with scant ceremony, almost imperceptibly. It grew to omnipotence with but a fraction of the solemnity and pomp which attended the development of the Church; hence, too, it has come to ripeness, to the zenith of its power, without any of that centralised organisation, without any of that self-conscious administration of its enormous powers for good and evil, and assuredly without any of that insight into the immensely sacred responsibility of its functions, which characterised the Church from the beginning.

Now its shrieking headlines, its catch-penny exaggerations, its hysterical falsehoods, do not even savour of sanity. How, then, could it be suspected of a sense of

responsibility? Sensationalism as a money-making method, ruthless and frequently thoughtless attacks on the existing order, without any guarantee of being able to supply a better order in the place of the one attacked, abuse of language as a method, as *the* journalistic technique for all occasions, and the determination not to enlighten, but to dazzle, dumbfound, scare, thrill and excite at all costs, willy nilly—*après moi le déluge*,—these are among the characteristics of the modern press, and indicate the direction in which its power is tending.

To overthrow or to curb this power has again and again proved too great a task even for the most popular government. It is invincible, impregnable. The "Freedom of the Press" may mean the freedom to abuse the credulity and the ignorance of the masses; but powerful claims are not frustrated by exact definition, however condemnatory.

There is only one way of curbing the wantonness of the press and of bringing it to a sense of the responsibility with which its power ought to have inspired it, and that is to make the masses who are its readers capable of reading it critically, capable of detecting its flagrant abuse of language, and of nailing to the counter its flame-words, its decoy cries, its whole apparatus of sensationalism.

And the only means to this end is to give to the masses a knowledge of their own language.

Who doubts that the mountains of vulgar, inept and thoroughly deleterious literature that is being published to-day depends wholly

and exclusively upon those countless hordes to whom the State has failed to impart that which is every man's direst need—a sound knowledge of his native tongue? Who doubts that all this literature would be swept away in an hour if a generation arose which was equipped to detect its solecisms, its vulgarity, its false sentiment, and its tumid clap-trap?

The newspaper press, and the flood of vulgar literature which daily accompanies its productions into the homes of almost all British people, are together partly responsible for the steady enfeeblement of the nation's moral fibre and intelligence; and the so-called "education" with which the mass of the nation is equipped is one of the necessary conditions to the success both of the present newspaper press and of the vulgar literature which supplements it.

Thus it amounts to this, that the huge outlay which this country makes every year for the purposes of education, is virtually a subsidy to its most incompetent, most unscrupulous and most despicable writers.

In order to render the outlay worth while, in order to convert it into a profitable investment, which at one and the same time would produce desirable citizens and lay the foundations of order among them, the present writer suggests as a leading reform, to be placed at the head of every party's programme, that the English language should be made the principal subject of study in our State schools.

What subject is there that is not touched upon in the learning of the precise meaning of words? And what subject is of any

value whatsoever if the precise meaning of words has been neglected in tuition?

This may sound revolutionary enough; but on examination it will be found to guarantee a much more stable and orderly form of society than the present system. For if it be asked what a man, educated in our elementary schools, remembers in after life of all the information he has been given as a child, the answer is: a little arithmetic—enough to make the everyday reckonings involved in buying and selling—and the trick of converting signs into sounds.

It is, however, precisely upon this trick of converting signs into sounds that his powers of subsequent self-education will chiefly depend. For, when once he has left his school career behind him, the working man who wishes to increase his knowledge and grasp of vital, human and social principles, will rely almost entirely upon the literature he can obtain and understand.

If, therefore, he approaches this literature, not equipped to understand, criticise and test its soundness, as matter, or the care and accuracy of its form, but only practised in the trick of converting signs into sounds, his attempts at subsequent self-education will be a futile waste of time.

For there is all the difference in the world between this acquired trick of deciphering, or converting signs into sounds, and true *reading*.

What is precisely meant by this antithesis?

By the "power of reading" most people understand not merely the power of deciphering signs, but also the ability to understand the meaning of the decipher once it is

made. Reading in the ancient Anglo-Saxon sense of the word (*rædan*) "to discern," is the only reading that can possibly be of any value, "discerning" therefore is the only valuable meaning that the word reading can have.*

But reading in this, its true sense, implies an understanding of the language deciphered.

Now can it be truly said of the children that leave our elementary schools that they have been taught reading in this sense?

They have certainly been taught to decipher; they have certainly been given the mastery of converting signs into sounds; but have they been taught to "read"?

At the most it might be conceded that they are partially taught to read—that is to say that they have a partial knowledge of reading; the amount being limited by the extent of their acquaintance with their native tongue. For the rest they know only a trick, which consists in turning signs into sounds.

Thus the neglect of English in our elementary schools to the advantage of other subjects, most of which are entirely forgotten by the pupils in later life, imposes upon our working classes, not only *dumbness*, not only susceptibility to infection by unsound opinion and doctrine, but also the inability successfully to achieve self-education

* The German *lesen* and the French *lire*, both have the same implication. They both imply discernment, understanding. The old high German *lesan* meant to collect with discrimination, and, with the French *lire* was allied to the Latin *legere*, which may mean to choose, to pick out, to single out, and to select,—all actions implying discernment and understanding.

by means of reading, when once the school career is done.

The question remains, are these distressing results sufficiently counterbalanced by the advantages supposed to derive from the study of other subjects?

There surely can be but one answer to this question, and that is an emphatic negative.

What greater asset can a man have than a sound knowledge of his native tongue? What surer safeguard could be given him against corruption, pollution, false doctrine, and inflammatory counsels? What more coveted power could he hope to acquire? And, above all, in this age of loose thinking and even looser speech, what nobler check could he have upon the vagaries of his fancy or the intemperance of his tongue?

It would constitute his greatest possession, and it is the nation's soundest policy to endow him with it. If the principle of State education be admitted at all, it is incumbent upon a people to teach its working classes to "read" before anything else, because reading in itself is at once a lofty accomplishment and the most certain means to all other accomplishments. Among the State's foremost and ineluctable duties, therefore, is the teaching of their native tongue to the masses. For, without this, reading is an impossibility.

We have seen how social disturbances—aye, and even revolutions, have been the outcome of falsely interpreting a single word; we have seen how national disillusionment and depression can arise out of the pursuit of ideals that are ultimately found to be

empty, simply because the words in which they were originally framed, though capable of creating much emotional activity never had any precise meaning. We have seen, moreover, how difficult it is to ascribe any genuine significance to such popular decoy words as Justice, Equality, and Liberty, than which no words in the English language can make a stronger emotional appeal to a crowd. If these remarks have been carefully considered, can there any longer be any question concerning the most vital, the most urgent reform in our educational system?

It now remains to discover what modifications would have to be made in our elementary school teaching in order to effect this reform.

The children who attend our elementary schools work about 22 hours a week—certainly not more—and they start their school career at about six years of age, and finish it at fourteen.*

The boys' curriculum at an average elementary school consists of the following subjects:—†

English, Arithmetic, Geography, History, Nature Study or Hygiene, Physics, Drawing, Singing, Physical Exercise, Manual Work.

The reader will only need to glance at this curriculum in order to realise how

* They may now continue their studies at continuation evening schools after fourteen years of age, if they choose, and earn money the while in some daily employment.

† The girls' curriculum, into which it will not be necessary to enter here, is very much the same as the boys', except that it excludes Manual Work and Physics, and includes Laundry, Cooking and Needlework.

varied the programme is, and how assiduously the subjects would require to be studied in the eight years of school life, in order to leave in the minds of the scholars a sufficient knowledge of them to be of use in later life.

Eight years, with 22 hours a week for forty-four weeks* a year, and such a programme! Can it be possible for the boys to acquire anything more than a mere smattering of each subject?

Subtracting from the total 22 hours, the hour and forty minutes per week allotted to Physical Exercise, there remain twenty hours and twenty minutes during which English, Arithmetic, Geography, History, Nature Study or Hygiene, Physics, Drawing, Singing and Manual Work have to be taught to children who reach school not yet knowing how to read. And elementary school teachers affirm that it is impossible to insist on the children doing any homework.

Of these 20 hours and 20 minutes in Standard VII.:—*English* occupies 5 hours 10 mins. per week, or 227 hours 20 mins., *i.e.*, 32 seven-hour days per year.

This leaves 15 hrs. 10 mins. per week for other subjects, and of this total:—

Arithmetic occupies 4 hrs. 20 mins. per week, or 190 hrs. 40 mins., *i.e.*, about 27 seven-hour days per year.

Geography occupies 2 hrs. per week, or 88 hrs., *i.e.*, $12\frac{1}{2}$ seven-hour days per year.

History occupies 1 hr. per week, or 44 hrs., *i.e.*, $6\frac{1}{4}$ seven-hour days per year.

* All the calculations that follow are based upon the assumption that eight weeks are allowed for holidays each year.

Hygiene occupies 30 mins. per week, or 22 hrs., *i.e.*, $3\frac{1}{8}$ seven-hour days per year.

Physics, the same as *Hygiene*.

Singing, the same as *History*.

Drawing occupies 2 hrs. 45 mins. per week, or 121 hrs., *i.e.*, a little over 17 seven-hour days per year.

Recreation and Registration occupy the remaining 3 hrs. 5 mins. per week, or 139 hrs., 20 mins., *i.e.*, a little over 19 seven-hour days per year.

Seeing that there is little or no homework in elementary schools, it is obvious that none of these subjects, except, perhaps, Arithmetic, can be taught sufficiently well to be of any use whatever to the child in after life. For, in the lower standards, although the apportionment of time varies somewhat, the variation is not material. When, moreover, it is remembered that most of the boys take 3 hours a week for Manual Work, and that these hours have to be subtracted from the time allotted to other subjects, it is clear that the ultimate result, in so far as that knowledge is concerned which represents a permanent asset to the individual, cannot be very satisfactory.

In fact, take it how you will, it must be acknowledged without either bitterness or malice that elementary education is nothing more than a very expensive and very elaborate farce.

It teaches the boys two things that they undoubtedly remember: the trick of deciphering letterpress, which constitutes them purchasers and readers of the lowest and most fatuous literature that sweated literary hacks can produce, and enough arithmetic

for them to master the ordinary numerical problems that may arise in the daily routine of their adult lives. Of History nothing, literally nothing, is remembered, except, perhaps, that there was once a king who spoilt some tarts (they are not quite certain whether it was Alfred the Great or the King of Hearts), and that there was once a monarch called William the Conqueror. Of Geography only the vaguest notions are retained, and these relate more often to the world as a whole than to their native land. Of Hygiene, Physics, not a trace is left—not even a recollection of the names of the subjects. While Singing and Drawing, except to the few, are a pure waste of time.

It is safe to say that this is true of the majority of the scholars, and since it is the majority of the children that constitute the great mass of the nation, it is on them we must concentrate our attention.

Since the object of all our expensive elementary school organisation ought to be to impart to them some valuable knowledge that they can retain throughout their lives, some valuable knowledge, moreover, in the acquisition of which the highest faculties of their mind would be disciplined and trained, surely it would be an advantage in the first place to concentrate on a fewer number of subjects, and secondly to select only those which could be of service to them in later life (for they are the only subjects that are ever remembered), and thirdly, to confine the study of the subject or subjects chosen, as far as possible, to those limits which, while they guarantee a solid foundation of learning, allow of further

unassisted progress when once the school career is over.

Now it seems to the present writer that no subject in the whole curriculum of schools answers these requirements more satisfactorily in every way than English itself.

It is at once an ideal means of disciplining and training the mind, of clarifying thought and of correcting vagueness and looseness of reasoning ; it is an excellent preservative of natural nobility of character, by opening up to the student the whole treasury of lofty thought and sentiment that the language contains ; it is a mental weapon against befoulment by prurient and other deleterious influences ; it is an instrument of criticism that can be employed at any moment, in any contingency, against the appeals of demagogues, agitators, and corruptors of all kinds, and it is a means of lucid and logical communication, without which no man can be said to be safe against misunderstanding or confusion. Above all—and this is its principal value to-day—a knowledge of English is essential to anyone who wishes to know how to “read.”

Now what would be the extent of the reforms required in order to make our elementary education chiefly a means of imparting a good and serviceable knowledge of English to the masses ?

In the first place, the elementary school teacher himself would have to be selected from a rather higher grade of educationalists. He would have to be qualified to teach English not only by precept but also by example. To-day, in the majority of cases, he could not teach English, even if he had

the time. As to expressing a thought in good English, the elementary school teacher and his boys are a case of the blind leading the blind. This is not the teacher's fault. He does his best, and in view of his training, his best is sometimes very good. Wherever the present writer has been, moreover, he has been compelled to recognise the efficiency and conscientiousness of this class of State official, and to applaud the result he obtains with the material at his disposal. Nevertheless, able as he is within his own limits, the elementary school teacher is, as a rule, incapable of teaching English, and if it is ever decided to extend the programme on the English side, the teacher himself will have to be the object of the first reforms.

As regards the curriculum, the changes would be more simple.

To begin with, the hours allotted to Arithmetic might well be reduced to a maximum of three per week. This would be ample to enable the least proficient scholars to master all the method they could ever be expected to require in after life, and at the same time would afford adequate opportunities for the detection of any mathematical genius who might be lurking in the school, and for whose case special provision might be made.

The time for Geography, the study of which might with advantage be confined to the general relations of England to the rest of the world, without any specialisation in home topography, which is invariably forgotten, might be reduced to half an hour a week.

History might be cancelled altogether,

and the teaching of the subject confined to such historical knowledge as the scholar could not help acquiring in learning the meaning of certain English words such as : Peer, Parliament, Constitution, Rebellion, Regicide, Suffrage, Reformation, Prime Minister, etc.*

Hygiene, Physics and Singing might also be cancelled with advantage, and the detection of specially good voices, or musical talent, left to that part of the English lessons given to the learning of old English folk-songs, canons and ballads.

With regard to drawing, it seems ridiculous that all boys should devote two hours 45 minutes per week to this subject. To thousands it must mean the most intolerable drudgery. Surely one hour per week would be enough to reveal any exceptional talent in the school, and for the teacher to discover all those who could not possibly profit from the subject, even if they continued at it to the end of their lives. The latter could then be weeded out of the class, and the hour allotted to drawing, in their case, could be sacrificed to Manual Work.

At all events, the hours set aside for

* Owing to the great importance of history in inspiring children to maintain the traditions of their country, it is only with the greatest reluctance that this subject is not allotted special hours to itself. It is, however, felt that in view of the short space of years that elementary education covers in the life-time of the working-class child, some drastic pruning of the curriculum must at all costs be made, as anything in the nature of a compromise inserts the thin edge of the wedge of superficiality in the teaching. Moreover, seeing that the English lesson will draw largely upon historical facts for the explanation of words, the subject cannot be regarded as entirely neglected in this programme.

Manual Work, seeing that it is a form of exercise, might be taken from the time allowed for Recreation* and the time allowed for Drawing (in the case of untalented boys), or from the time allowed for Recreation and the time allowed for Arithmetic (in the case of artistic boys).

By this means it would be possible to add 7 hrs. 40 mins. per week to the time occupied in teaching English, or 337 hrs. 20 mins., *i.e.*, 48 seven-hour days per year, making a grand total, with the existing hours allotted to English, of 12 hrs. 50 mins. per week, or 564 hrs. 40 mins., *i.e.*, 80½ seven-hour days per year.

Although this still appears to be an exiguous allowance, in view, not only of the importance of the subject, but also of the home influences which for a generation at least would prove a serious obstacle to progress, it is sufficient for much to be made of it; and in this period, for seven years, it ought to be possible to give each boy a very considerable mastery of English. In any case, it would enable a foundation to be laid upon which subsequent self-education could safely repose.

The teaching would have to consist principally of exercises in the precise meaning and proper use of words, the aim being to give each child, not only a very much larger vocabulary than that which he learns at school to-day, but also a mastery in the

* As the whole week's work amounts only to 22 hours, and there is no home work, boys at an elementary school cannot in any case be said to be overworked, and there would be no hardship involved in curtailing the time allowed for recreation, or in cancelling it altogether.

use of each word, which would prevent both confusion in expression, and misunderstanding in reading or listening. Good, careful reading would therefore be exacted from all, and the excellence of the performance of each boy would not be judged so much from the standpoint of glibness or fluency, as from the ease and accuracy with which he understands the meaning of what he has read.

In the process of teaching the correct meaning of words, the boys would necessarily acquire their stock of sound and proper ideas about life and humanity, because it is impossible to teach the meaning of certain abstract words relating to society and life, without imparting true ideas. Thus, without feeling any of the natural repulsion that healthy boys would instinctly feel towards a moral or philosophical lesson, they would nevertheless be able to absorb a philosophy of life, the lack of which in their education to-day is one of its principal blemishes.*

More stress would also be laid on the teaching of grammar than is the custom to-day. The present system, inspired by the Board of Education, deliberately neglects grammar, and the results are noticeable in every sentence that proceeds from

* It is true that in its *Suggestions for the Consideration of Teachers* (p. 28) the Board of Education does lay down that: "One of the fundamental purposes of education is to ensure that the child has an ample fund of ideas about the world in which it lives, and that these ideas should be, as far as may be, full and exact"; but what follows (pp. 28, 29) is so meaningless and reveals such an inadequate appreciation of the value of ideas in adult life, that it stultifies the value of the foregoing.

the lips of a working class child.* Since logical expression, and the understanding of the logical construction of a long sentence are impossible without a complete mastery of Grammar, it is most important that Grammar should be properly and specially taught. And with English as the only big subject of the school curriculum, this ought to be perfectly possible.

Next in importance would be the study of good authors in and out of class. The boys would have to learn to appreciate instances of happy construction, or apt and vivid expression. In Standard VI. and VII., they would also be encouraged to call the teacher's attention to what they thought was a misuse or abuse of words, either in their father's newspaper, or in any literature of doubtful quality at home.

Daily practice in accurate expression, and in criticism of other boys' speech, together with the learning by heart of long passages from the best poets, the Bible, and some of the best prose writers; weekly exercises in composition, and a rigorous training in exact definition—these with a leisurely training in the best old English songs, canons and ballads, would complete a training that would send every child forth into the world with at least one subject thoroughly learned, with at least one weapon well mastered for

* *Ibid*, p. 39: "The minutiae of Parsing should be completely omitted. . . . There should be no Grammar teaching apart from the other English lessons, it should arise naturally out of the reading and composition lessons." One headmaster of an elementary school with whom the present writer discussed the question of Parsing, declared that he greatly regretted that it had been dropped.

the struggle of life, and above all with a more or less certain guarantee that he would be immune to the lure of vulgar taste in literature, and to the deliberate deceptions and traps that all those quill-driving monsters, who to-day stand enthroned over the minds and the hearts of our working classes, daily and hourly prepare for the further stultification and corruption of their victims.

Very soon a marked change would come over the nation. Its present highly strung and hysterical condition, which has been induced chiefly by the sensationalism of its vulgar newspapers and other cheap literature, would yield before a more sober and more dignified state of mind. Not a child whose spirits had been brought into vivifying contact with the noblest of the nation's thoughts and sentiments, could help manifesting signs of this invigorating intercourse in later life. Among the meanest of them it would leave behind at least the dim recollection that there were things in heaven and earth that were greater than themselves, that there were sacred and lofty heights in the intellectual productions of their nation, which they had once gazed upon as it were from afar, and while this memory would sustain them in their patriotism and fortify them in their self-respect, it would also tend to check that spirit of irreverence for all things which is one of the most alarming features of the Age.

Again, instead of opening the school gates to let loose a flood of fourteen-year-old hooligans, with no mental equipment except gutter smartness, children taught in this

way would be sent forth into the world possessing at least a foundation of sound knowledge, a basis of valuable ideas and principles concerning life and humanity, the benefit of which they themselves and their neighbours would feel at every moment of their lives.

And this immensely desirable result, this crying need of the present day, could be obtained at what cost? At the cost of small smatterings of History, Geography, Drawing, Hygiene, and Physics, which are forgotten within nine months of leaving school, which even remembered would be of little practical value, and which, so far from having been introduced into the curriculum with serious intent, appear rather to have found their way there by accident and to have been retained purely from motives of idle and fruitless display.

CHAPTER VII

SOCIAL REFORM *

“ Things are so bad that, to have any genuine insight to-day, any special human feeling to-day, means perforce to devote these gifts to the social problem, instead of to art and beauty. That is the curse of having been born in this Age.”—Extract from a novel of last year.

A CERTAIN unaffected hopelessness characterises the mood of modern men, for which it is difficult to find an adequate cause. There is a pessimism rife to-day, which, far from being a pose or a pretence, lies so deeply imbedded in the hearts of most people, that it is their constant effort to conceal, rather than to proclaim it, when they are in the presence of their fellows. A cheerful smile, a laugh that sounds like merriment, a vivacious and buoyant manner—these outward signs of unruffled gaiety may now be simulated by men when they are in company ; they may even be enjoined upon all as social etiquette ; but when once he is left to himself, modern man smoothens out his laugh-wrinkled cheeks, compresses his relaxed lips, and abandons himself to that attitude of mind now perhaps as universal as it is secret, which for lack of a better term we may describe as settled despondency.

* The ideas from which this essay has been developed were first embodied in a short article called *Happiness and Social Reform*, contributed by the present writer to the “Oxford Fortnightly,” in November, 1913.

Among the cultivated this attitude remains more or less a private concern of the individual. The thinking man, unlike the savage, does not beat his wife and children, or blame his immediate surroundings, if he feels hopeless. He knows the cause is probably more remote than the behaviour of his kith and kin, or circle of friends; and though he may be as incapable as the savage of finding the true cause, he withholds his anger, or postpones the expression of his gloomy thoughts until such time as their true cause becomes apparent to him.

Among the uncultivated, however, this mood of gloom or of convinced despair, harbouring as it does in minds that are less inclined to be philosophical, renders them litigious and vindictive. Some one or some circumstance not too remote must be responsible, it is thought, for their peevishness; they therefore become irascible and angry, and seek to vent their spleen on that person or thing which, on the strength of its proximity alone, appears to be the immediate cause of their ill-humour. Conditions that satisfied them theretofore now become insufferable and must be changed; prospects that smiled upon them formerly now appear too black to be faced with calm. Pleasure—or rather distraction—is sought feverishly, gluttonously, until, since it leaves them still with the old langour at their hearts, it also is rejected as part of the general conspiracy to depress their spirits. Nothing pleases, nothing beckons. The same aching certainty of discontent always returns, whatever else may go.

When a nation feels like this, when a

whole continent feels like this, there arises what politicians are pleased to call a state of "social unrest." By giving it a name it is hoped presumably that it will be explained away. Unfortunately, however accurate the terms of a description may be, they do nothing towards helping to remove the trouble they describe. But in this particular case it may be questioned whether the words "social unrest" form even an accurate description.

A society that is at rest is not necessarily the ultimate desideratum. A society that is not at rest cannot therefore be necessarily bad. On the contrary, social unrest has been characteristic of all the greatest and most fertile moments in history. What could have been more unrestful than the period that witnessed the spread of the Roman power, or the period of the Renaissance?

To call the present period simply one of social unrest therefore does not even give us an inkling of the true and alarming symptom of the trouble—the settled despondency that is invading all hearts.

By the phrase "social unrest," we might, for instance, be led to suspect that the secondary and particular symptoms of the trouble were the primary and general symptoms. What are the secondary and particular symptoms of the trouble? Labour's general and determined dissatisfaction with the conditions of labour all over Europe.

Suppose we accept the secondary as the primary symptoms, how can we then account for the deep pessimism and gloom of the cultivated—not merely those among the cultivated who fear they may lose by

Labour's attitude, but those who are disinterested enough to fear nothing except the incurable canker at their hearts? Can they truly be said to share Labour's general and determined dissatisfaction with the conditions of labour all over Europe?

Labour's dissatisfaction, therefore, cannot possibly be a primary symptom. It is only the proletariat's adaptation to the primary symptom; just as hedonism, neurasthenia, lunacy and frenzied interest in new-fangled creeds and movements, may be the cultivated man's adaptation to the primary symptoms.

To call the present state of affairs simply social unrest is to magnify unduly a secondary and particular, into the importance of a primary and general, symptom.

Whatever the subsequent adaptation to it may be, the true primary symptom must be common to both classes, the labouring and the employing classes, and that true primary symptom, it is here suggested, is the mood of unaffected hopelessness that characterises all modern men. And since, as a primary symptom, it is common to all men, it must have a common cause.

Doubtless a good deal of it may be easily accounted for in the manner outlined at the opening of Chapter I. As everyone knows, physical and spiritual weariness do not need to last very long in order to induce the most stubborn dejection; and since there can be no doubt that, as the result of life's present unprecedented complexity and breakneck speed, modern men of all classes are suffering from physical and particularly nervous exhaustion, we might reason-

ably expect to find depression as one of its accompanying features.

To the present writer, however, the recognition of this modicum of melancholy that must be found everywhere wedded to bodily and spiritual weariness, although important, does not seem sufficient to explain the universality of the present existence of secret low spirits. It seems to him that a deeper cause must be sought; for it has come to his own, as it must have come to other people's notice, that the low spirits in question are to be found even where the harassing complications of life and the present high speed of life are least often and least severely felt. It is as if a sentiment, and not a material cause were the chief source of the pessimism that we are now considering. And, since this pessimism is everywhere rife, it must be supposed that the sentiment also is universal, and must have preceded the former in all men's hearts.

As to the precise nature of this supposed sentiment, there may be various and even conflicting opinions; the hypothesis favoured here, however, is the following:—

The sentiment that is now lodged in all European hearts, irrespective of class or country, and is responsible for the gloom that has descended upon all nations, is a compound of deep and bitter *disappointment* on the one hand, with the *suspicion* of having been *duped* and left stranded on the other.

There is a feeling that the leading ideals by which our fathers and grandfathers guided their lives, and to which we, who were born in the last century, also aspired, have proved false ideals. And, coupled with this

feeling, there is, in the first place, the growing conviction that we should have done better, and shown ourselves more expert in managing our affairs, if, instead of trying to act up to those ideals, we had renounced them altogether; and secondly, that now that we see ourselves compelled to abandon these old ideals, we are stranded without any guiding principles whatsoever.

The old ideals have proved worthless and even dangerous, and we are therefore abandoning them; but no new ideals have been created to take their place.

It is this feeling that now constitutes the disease in all men's hearts—the feeling of the enlightened child of besotted and degenerate parents, who, looking back upon them calmly and dispassionately in his maturity, is ashamed of the guileless filial passion he once felt for them in his childhood, and yet knows himself to be terribly cold and alone in his spiritual orphanage.

"Progress," that toughest among our grandfathers' and fathers' ideals, has been the last to perish; but with it perhaps went our stoutest hopes and our firmest beliefs. We have now buried it, to the accompaniment of the gravest doubts concerning not merely whether we are better, or better off, than the men of the 16th and 17th centuries, but also whether we are better, or better off even than the Cro-Magnon men who lived thirty thousand years before the present era.

To those who could believe in the existence of an all-powerful, beneficent deity—and which of us had grandfathers or fathers who did not?—there was something supremely

logical and inevitable in this idea of Progress. How could life fail to improve seeing that a beneficent deity was controlling it, and must therefore be directing all things towards a common good?

But now the objections to this belief scarcely require to be stated. Everybody knows, everybody sees, that it must be wrong. And those exceptional people whose minds and eyes still need some assistance before they feel able to reject it, have only to examine certain statistics in order to become assured that their conservatism is without foundation.

And how many ideals have not gone the same way as "Progress"? Who believes in "Democracy" nowadays? Who believes in Parliamentary Government, in the ultimate triumph of Altruism, in the Brotherhood of mankind, in Universal Suffrage? In short, who believes in the desirability of the whole of Western civilisation, or of its extension to countries that are still uncontaminated by it?

How could the contemplation of such a hecatomb of perverted ideals fail to create despondency, seeing that despite the lack of other ideals to take their place, and everybody's horror at what has occurred, every sane man in every civilised land is convinced that, had the hecatomb not already been made, he would have been compelled to pile it up with his own hands?

Perhaps it may sound to some an unwarrantable assumption to maintain that a complete negation of the beliefs of a former century—aye, and in some cases, of a former

millenium—necessarily constitutes a state of deep distress.

Those who entertain this view can only be recommended to ponder the enormous influence that strong, deep-rooted beliefs play in the lives of large communities, particularly when these beliefs constitute the very confidence, trust and faith which such communities feel in the worthiness and the value of their common aims and endeavours. Shake these beliefs, and the energy which theretofore had been directed evenly towards a certain bourne, a definite goal, finds itself dammed up or lost on the high road ; remove them altogether, and it is not impossible that the very generation of energy itself will cease. People become listless, indolent, hopeless ; and the acute stage of danger is soon reached when everyone cries openly or in his heart : " What is the good of it all ? *Cui bono ?* "

The repercussion of this state of distress upon language has already been discussed. It is clear that, with the loss of guiding ideals and beliefs, the important leading words connected with these ideals and beliefs become entirely meaningless and devoid of any distinct associations. In addition to finding himself completely astray, therefore, modern man's forlorn condition is complicated by serious bewilderment. A large number of the words which, owing to their long association with deep-rooted beliefs and guiding ideals, still stimulate great emotional excitement in him, have no corresponding meaning in reality—in fact, have no meaning at all. The sounds remain, and from sheer habit evoke certain sensations ; but the

beliefs which gave these sounds some reality have departed.

Thus even the least sensitive man of the present age, has gradually become conscious of no longer having any secure footing. The ground under his feet seems to be slipping away and he throws out his arms desperately to catch at some support.

Deep, almost rancorous disappointment, coupled with the suspicion that he has been duped and left stranded—this compound, it is suggested, constitutes the sentiment which is now lodged in the heart of every European. And it is this sentiment which is the cause of the present universal and stubborn pessimism in all countries where Western civilisation prevails.

Unfortunately the only cure for this kind of chronic melancholy is the promulgation of new beliefs, new goals, new values. A new faith is perhaps the most crying need of all. But where are the great men of to-day who could undertake this task?

In the masses, or proletariat, of all countries, this pessimism, arising out of the sentiment analysed above, expresses itself, as is only natural, in the most irreconcilable discontent. What does the man in the street know of remote causes, particularly when they are spiritual? As we have already hinted above, material causes are the first he thinks of; because they are the first that lie to hand. And when, moreover, he finds every self-seeking agitator ready to prove that material circumstances are the cause of his trouble, how can he any longer doubt that here indeed he has traced his misery to its source?

Thus among the masses, the prevailing pessimism takes the form of an economic struggle, which has little or nothing to do with the actual amount of happiness or unhappiness that is to be gained. And in the leisured classes, the same affliction is leading to mad hedonism, neurasthenia, lunacy, and a thirst for new religions and movements, which is frequently out of all proportion to the sanity of the interests these have to offer.

While, however, the masses, owing to the more precise nature of their demands (always confined to the economic field and never touching upon spiritual needs) and also to the greater volume of their clamour, have succeeded in directing the attention of all would-be reformers upon themselves, the cultivated also, partly hypnotised by the insistence of the proletariat's outcry, have made the mistake of supposing that in material reforms alone can salvation be found.

In the absence of new ideals, sound beliefs, and a great new faith, that would once again knit modern mankind together in a united effort and a common aim, not only the proletariat, but also large numbers of the cultivated classes, have come to the conclusion that it is in economic changes that a recovery of the *joie de vivre* is to be found. And such ideals as Communism, Socialism, and Bolshevism, which are purely economic (*i.e.*, material), in their objects and methods, are now held up as panaceas for the ills of the whole world.

To suppose, however, that economic changes alone will make any difference to the present

deep depression of man, is to misunderstand the whole nature of his trouble.

If there is anything in the analysis contained in the preceding paragraphs; if the diagnosis of modern pessimism which it offers is not entirely wrong and beside the mark, it is obvious that economic changes, however drastic, can and will do nothing to alleviate the state of distress in which everybody who lives where Western civilisation prevails, now finds himself.

Improve the conditions of the indigent how you will, elevate the standard of living as high as you choose, you are nevertheless powerless to reduce even by one gush of tears, the misery and discontent that prevails among all classes in the modern civilised world, unless you understand and can deal with the more profound and more complicated spiritual cause that lies at the root of this misery.

Nobody in his senses denies that there is yet room for improvement in the standard of living among large sections of the proletariat; nobody who has studied the question doubts for one instant that the conditions of the indigent are frequently directly conducive to both physical and spiritual disease, and therefore that they require modification; but to suppose that the need for this departmental improvement is sufficiently pressing and promising of good far-reaching results, to justify the upheaval of the whole of the existing system of life, is to confess yourself so completely fascinated and hypnotised by a particular aspect alone of modern unhappiness, as it is manifested in one particular section of society, as to have remained blind

to all other aspects of it which are to be observed in other sections.

Posterity will certainly look back upon this Age as an epoch in which there existed but one really strong obsession. It will recognise that in matters of religion we were independent, individualistic, disunited, and scattered. It will also see that in the domain of art, literature, and science, divergence of opinion, to the extent of open civil war, was general and commonplace. On one question, however, it will be compelled to acknowledge our complete unanimity and concord, and that question is Social Reform.

All classes and all political parties at the opening of the 20th century in Great Britain will be declared to have been solidly bent on achieving this one object; and for some obscure reason, which perhaps will for ever remain a mystery even to an enlightened posterity, that social reform will be characterised as having had in view always the amelioration of but one section of the community—the poorer section, from the standpoint of material wealth—that is to say, that it was certainly a downward glance, a downcast eye, that constituted the attitude of its most fervent advocates and their followers.

Subsequent generations, if they are sufficiently philosophical, will perceive the error here, without perhaps being able to explain it. It may be possible now, however, to forestall their speculations and to shed upon the question some light that may be helpful to them.

It has been said that misery is at present

general, that it runs through all classes in all countries.

Furthermore, it has been suggested that this misery has its root in a sentiment which is a compound of rancorous disappointment and the feeling that we have been duped and left stranded.

This sentiment has been traced to the failure and demonstrated emptiness of all the leading beliefs and ideals of the last century, and even before that.

Now the particular expression of this misery which is at present given by the more indigent sections of the community, is discontent with their condition, leading to an economic struggle.

The expression of this misery which is at present given by the wealthier sections of the community consists in an unusually fierce form of hedonism, insanity, neurasthenia, and religious mania.

Strange to say, however, the cure for the misery which is being recommended by the proletariat and in the general terms of which large numbers of the plutocracy are already acquiescing, is Social Reform, which, in its more moderate guise, aspires simply to the elevation of the standard of living among the labouring classes; and in its extreme form (as in Russia, for instance) envisages the overthrow of the present system in favour of Communism, Socialism, or Bolshevism.

Now even if the analysis of modern misery given above were only approximately accurate, it must be plain that:—

(1) To set out to relieve the misery of only one section of the community—the

poorer section—when all the community is unhappy, amounts obviously only to attempting a partial cure, in fact to concerning one's self only with one aspect and secondary manifestation of the general trouble.

(2) To concentrate upon social reform, even in its most moderate form, is to assume that which has yet to be demonstrated: that an improvement in the material conditions of the proletariat is really all that the world wants in order to recover happiness.

(3) To suppose that any such purely material or economic reform as Communism, can effect a complete cure all round, is to assume that the causes of modern unhappiness are purely material or economic—an assumption which, so far from being supported by the facts, has all the evidence of the unhappiness of the wealthy classes against it.

Now let these objections be taken one by one in their order, and considered more fully.

(1) Is it, or is it not a fact, that all classes, rich and poor alike, are now suffering from deep spiritual depression? If it is a fact, it is obviously ridiculous and unfair to attempt even along economic lines (that is by material reforms alone) to alleviate the pain only of one class; and the concentration of attention upon proletarian unhappiness, constitutes an absurd and utterly unjustifiable obsession. If, on the other hand, it is not a fact that all classes are suffering equally from deep spiritual depression, a somewhat formidable array of unpleasant facts are left utterly unexplained

and unco-ordinated. These are : the steady spread of apathy, cynicism, listlessness and recklessness—always signs of great unhappiness—among the wealthy classes ; the frenzied search for new creeds, new movements, new interests, however childish, always a sign of despair ; and the unceasing pursuit of pleasure among the non-religious sections of the wealthy classes—a sign of intense boredom, weariness and gloom.

Now it is only due to the characteristic obtuseness and shallowness of this Age, that no attention has been paid to the unhappiness of the wealthier classes, which in many instances is very severe indeed ; and it is due to the absurdly exalted notion of their prestige, and their own extravagant estimate of their dignity, that they themselves have not made more clamour to call the attention of the community to their misery. Labouring under the utterly unsupported modern belief that where economic conditions are sound, everything is sound, we do not find the leaders of the Church organising missions to the mansions of the wealthy in order to make sure that their spiritual life is healthy and free from the blights of gloom and despair ; obsessed as everyone is by the supposed inaccessibility of wealth to the common spiritual distempers of the Age, we never hear of charitable charwomen undertaking a course of district visiting to the women of the wealthier classes, in order to investigate the cause of their despondency and to help them to overcome it. And yet, strange as such a procedure would sound to modern ears, is it really so palpably offensive to good sense ? The very fact

that most people would suspect a man of joking who recommended such action, shows conclusively how far we are from realising the extent of the spiritual misery, besottedness and turpitude prevailing among our wealthier classes.

Is this misery to be left entirely suspended in the air by the proposed economic reforms of the coming era? As a symptom it has been shown that the unhappiness of the wealthier classes is as important and significant as any other phenomenon of modern times. Do people really suppose that certain economic changes, certain improvements in the standard of living of the poor, are going to set the whole world right, including the chronic unhappiness of the present wealthy classes? It has been suggested that this unhappiness of the wealthy has a deep root, and that at its root it joins with the unhappiness of the indigent. How can any tinkering at material conditions possibly be expected to reach that root?

If social reformers had their way, if in their superficial analysis of modern misery, they were allowed to proceed with their "improvements," the changes they would be able to bring about would leave absolutely intact the whole of the major cause of the trouble that obsesses them. In a trice the "improved" conditions would become habitual conditions, and then, once the diversion had spent its force, the old unhappiness would return with possibly even greater malignity. Anybody who doubts this is invited to dwell on the economic improvements already achieved among the poorer classes of the nation, and to assess the pro-

portionate amount of increased happiness that has accompanied them.

(2) Many years ago, George Gissing, than whom no English writer was better qualified to speak with authority on the question of rich and poor, made the following remark: "A being of superior intelligence regarding humanity with an eye of perfect understanding would discover that life was enjoyed every bit as much in the slum as in the palace." In other words, it must have occurred to most thinking people that laughter, if heard at all, is heard quite as frequently in the kitchen as in the drawing-room,—that is to say, that happiness is relative, and that the possibility of ultimate adaptation to all conditions makes the degree of happiness enjoyed by each human being more or less uniform. At all events, the fact that material conditions are the first, which, if constant, cease to be noticed, and therefore cease to contribute actively to happiness, must have been observed by most people of ordinary acumen. It would therefore constitute a gross misunderstanding both of human nature and of life in general, to suppose that standards of living, even very much lower than those of our present unskilled labouring classes, would necessarily destroy happiness for those compelled to endure them. And, conversely, it would constitute a grave misconception of the nature of happiness to suppose that an improved standard of living necessarily brings happiness in its train, or has anything to do with happiness. All those who, for five years of the Great War, had to live on indifferent food, imperfectly cooked, served

in inconvenient and frequently filthy quarters, and on unsightly and grubby utensils, will bear the present writer out in this, and will agree with him when he says that material conditions cannot possibly bear the deep causal relation to happiness that so many thousands of solemn would-be philosophers now allege. Beyond a certain point—that is to say, *when once the possibility of daily repletion with wholesome foodstuffs, and sufficient daily repose has been attained*, material conditions, so far from being conducive to happiness or unhappiness, are not even noticed.

To improve the material conditions of the proletariat beyond the stage of comfortable security, therefore, will not and cannot increase their general happiness by one iota. It may urge them to the mad hedonism of the rich, it may drive them to the surfeited apathy and neurasthenia of the plutocratic classes and stimulate their appetite for new-fangled creeds and movements, but it will not increase their happiness, neither will it do anything to alleviate the misery that was analysed in the first half of this chapter, under which they, like the wealthier classes, are now groaning.

(3) Assuming, however, that the whole of the above reasoning is hopelessly wrong and even vicious; taking it for granted, as many undoubtedly will, that the misery here alleged to be common both to the modern rich and the modern poor, which social reform cannot alter, is a pure myth, an ingenious fiction, inspired by the trumpety aims of reaction alone; it may still be asked whether those who concentrate so pains-

takingly upon material and economic reforms, have satisfied themselves that their diagnosis of the trouble is the correct one. The implication underlying their activities and their programme, is that material and economic conditions should be the principal concern of all. They pin their faith to the amelioration of the standard of living, and whether they wish to achieve this end by Communism, Socialism, or Bolshevism, they confess by the principles they adopt, that they recognise no other avenue to salvation.

But it is surely no quibble to demand of them some proof that their proposed cures have been conceived as the result of a scrupulously careful investigation into the causes of the disease. Without necessarily incurring the suspicion of undue prejudice, it is surely not unreasonable to request them, before inaugurating their subversive reforms, to give their critics some demonstration of the accuracy of their diagnosis.

Has this been done? Has any conclave of accredited psychologists, thinkers and social reformers, ever sat to deliberate upon the true causes of modern misery? And having deliberated, have they published to the world any conclusion to the effect that everything in modern society *except only the condition of the poor*, can be continued and maintained with impunity, without fears of a recurrence of the present malady?

Nobody can contend that the advocates of social reform in so far as this is confined to material and economic changes, have even satisfied themselves—still less the rest of the world—that economic causes are the most potent in accounting for the

misery prevailing in Western Civilisation. Nobody would even argue that they had begun to question the correctness of their materialistic interpretation of "Social Unrest," and since the reforms they propose are drastic and destructive, as witness the Utopia in Russia, the world has a right, and more particularly have the working masses in all countries a right, to insist upon the disease of modernity being thoroughly understood before it is treated.

It is not claimed for an instant that the analysis given in the first part of this chapter is necessarily the right one ; but it is certainly hoped that by suggesting perhaps a new avenue of approach to these problems, it will not only show that there are more ways than one of solving them, but also stimulate thought along lines not habitually followed by social reformers.

The present writer himself is, at any rate, convinced of two things :—

First, that social reform, either moderate or in its extreme expression as Communism or Bolshevism, is a modern obsession, resulting from a gratuitous concentration upon the material conditions alone of one class only of the community ; and that all changes that are inspired by this obsession are certain to be wrong and utterly disastrous, seeing that it takes no cognisance of the great unhappiness that is unconnected with the state of indigence.

Second, that the relation of happiness to material conditions is a subject of such deep misunderstanding at the present day that, at all events, reforms which rely too obstinately upon the accepted and general

view of this relation, are sure to lead to the most distressing blunders, without relieving by one iota, the burden of misery that is borne by the whole population, rich and poor alike.

In conclusion, the following considerations may prove of value in regard to the general question of social reform, and to the particular question of happiness :—

The present state of settled despondency in all classes may be the result of a number of agencies, with the continued operation of any one of which it might be fatal to start a new era with any hope of achieving greater happiness.

The world has come to its present pass by means of the observance of hundreds of values, among which it is possible that the most unsuspected are the most powerful causes of the general decline in the joie de vivre.

For instance, to make a few suggestions at random, it is possible that the general European attitude of toleration towards disease, crippledom, congenital debility and physical disabilities of all kinds, may be totally wrong. It may be that the steady infection of the healthy mass of the people by the careful perpetuation, preservation and propagation, of the population's unhealthiest elements, may have acted as a gradual poison in four ways: (a) as a depressing spectacle and therefore as a destroyer of joy to the sensitive; (b) as an unnecessary burden upon the hale and the hearty, exacting too heavy a toll from their energy and good spirits; (c), as a source of deterioration to the healthiest elements in the race; and (d) negatively, by making it difficult for the desirable percentage of very successful creatures to be

born,—those creatures who, by their beauty, grace and wanton spirits, ennobled life, by holding up a lofty example of Life's highest possibilities. It is possible, that is to say, that Humanitarianism is merely an inverted form of cruelty; in other words, instead of directing their cruelty against the undesirable, humanitarians direct it against the desirable, and cheerfully sacrifice the hale and the hearty to the physiologically botched.

It is also conceivable that democratic institutions, by levelling competition and rewards down to the plane of the meanest attainments, have introduced a sort of craft-apathy, or eagerness-mute-stop, into the hearts of all those superior workmen who, along ordinary unrestricted and unconstrained paths, would have delighted in displaying the higher gifts that differentiate them from their fellows, and would thus have increased the sum of general happiness by their contribution of triumphant spirits and the expression of their gratified effort.

It is possible, too, that life in very large cities, like London, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Edinburgh, etc., by bringing each individual man and woman too constantly into touch, in fact into daily irritating contact, with thousands of their fellows,—so that in the thoroughfares of these large cities human beings may truly be said to stand as rank as weeds,—has led to a kind of semi-conscious misanthropy, which steadily depresses the *joie de vivre*, by destroying the joy that all should feel in the contemplation and society of their fellows. The struggle for room, for sheer air space, is sometimes so acute in these large cities, and in the fight

for unobstructed progression each advantage is contested with so much malice and spite, that it is not extravagant to suppose that a natural and perfectly instinctive impulse to be friendly and philanthropic, may step by step, be turned to the most irreconcilable hatred and contempt of humanity. It is not even impossible for this change to occur without the person in whom it has taken place being in the least conscious of the true causes of his mental transformation. But upon convinced misanthropy of this sort it is impossible to build a happy and contented community. Hence possibly a goodly portion of the unhappiness of modern times in large cities.

Again in regard to the very alternative of philanthropic or misanthropic sentiment, in a well-known passage of the moral teaching of most Europeans, there occurs the famous command "Love thy neighbour." And there are not a few sentimentalists who, accepting this doctrine as the remedy for all social evils, proclaim with full-throated fervour, that if only there were more love in the world, all would be well. Now it must surely have occurred to a large number of people, that if there is one human impulse known to all mankind that responds with difficulty to the word of command, it is precisely the impulse to love. A man may, by an effort of will, stop his breathing and die,—it is said that negro slaves constantly did this in the holds of humane British seamen's ships in the 18th century;—a man may by an effort of will obey the command to kill himself and unhesitatingly raise the means of suicide to his throat;—in Japan this command used

frequently to be given and as frequently obeyed;—but by no effort of will, however severe the command, can a man be made to feel the impulse to love his neighbour. Love springs spontaneously in the human breast. Its provocation is invariably, not a word of command, not a behest, but the charm, grace, or other perfection of an object contemplated. There is therefore little psychological insight in the command "Love thy neighbour." Nobody would deny that to love one's neighbour is an excellent prescription for happy social life; but nobody who was not sadly ignorant of human nature, or divinely insular, would dream of attempting to achieve this end by commanding it. The only way to set about loving one's neighbour, with benignity aforethought, as it were, is, in the first place, *to make him loveable*. For love is a spontaneous impulse springing up in the breast through contemplation or comprehension of some charming or otherwise alluring object.

Now it is possible that modern life, with all its besotting, emasculating, and uglifying occupations, with its total absence of any check upon the multiplication of the unsightly and unsavoury, its sickness, and its second-rate, third-rate and fourth-rate healthiness, is pursuing diametrically the opposite aim. It is destroying the aesthetic basis of the impulse to love; and, except where sexual attraction is at work, renders love of one's neighbour a practical impossibility. It would be ridiculous, and eminently unscientific, to overlook this factor in the gradual disintegration and unhappiness of modern society. For a community in which all the

elements fly asunder when they meet, is unlikely to be either harmonious or happy. Thus the increasing unloveableness of one's neighbour, as the result of the increasing ugliness and unsavouriness of most European populations, cannot be altogether disregarded.

The above are only a few among the unsuspected and possible contributory causes of modern misery. It would be easy to continue on the same lines at considerable length, and further suggestions will be made in the last chapter; but surely, even at this stage, enough has already been said, to persuade the thoughtful reader that social reform alone, as it is generally understood, both in its moderate and extreme guise, might be completely and even magnificently realised, and yet leave some of the most potent causes of despondency as flourishing and as prevalent as ever.

Some of our most respected values lie at the root of the contributory causes just outlined. Would it not be wiser, before starting on our wild goose chase in search of new world orders, to decide whether such values as those which are radical to the contributory causes, are sufficiently sound to be maintained? For these contributory and unsuspected causes, which have been outlined above, are all supplementary to the principal cause analysed in the first part of this chapter.

Thus a good deal of spade work would appear to be both wise and even indispensable, before we can proceed with any confidence to the facile solution of modern misery, consisting in altering our economic

conditions;* and this spade work, which seems to the thinker to be little more than a measure of ordinary prudence, overlooked though it has been by the Bolsheviks, may in the end prove the very means of sustaining the success and ensuring the permanence of whatever economic modifications may subsequently appear necessary and advisable.

At all events, to proceed along any other lines, would certainly mean that a large number of essential and principal elements in the general causation of modern misery, would run a grave risk of being overlooked; it would therefore mean that the continued presence of these elements would remain to mar any measure of success that any radical economic reform might achieve, and would thus demonstrate to the whole world a fact which, despite the example of Russia, is by no means sufficiently clear: that social reform like Protestantism in the 15th century, like Puritanism in the 17th, and like Republicanism in the 18th, is an obsession, the hypnotic power of which is out of all proportion to the amount of good it can possibly establish by its successful fulfilment.

* It will not have escaped the careful reader's notice that the reason why social reform and new economic programmes generally have enjoyed so much favour, particularly with the mass of superficial mankind, is that in the midst of misery, they seem to offer immediate "practical" remedies. That word "practical" is the passport, or rather the password, of most of the stupidest beliefs and practices that succeed in becoming popular. Because deeper remedies, and the deeper causes of unhappiness, do not occur to the superficial minds of the masses in all countries, social reform, which is palpably obvious, is called "practical" and thereby canonised by the crowd.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PHYSIOLOGY OF SOCIAL UNREST

“ He caused the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man ; that he may bring forth food out of the earth ; and wine that maketh glad the heart of man and bread which strengtheneth man’s heart.”

Psalms, 104, 14, 15.

ONE day, perhaps, an enlightened generation of historians will arise, who will regard it as their mission to inform mankind concerning the repeated instances in the past when cherished romantic illusions alone—quite apart from economic conditions, the vagaries of monarchs, or the viciousness of laws—have led to disastrous upheavals, both national and universal, in the life of the race. History has not been studied sufficiently from the standpoint of ideology. The tyranny of the individual, whether monarch, statesman or rebel, still remains the obsession of our writers of national annals. We have yet to see a historical work in which the tyranny of an idea, of a principle, and particularly of an illusion, is traced with meticulous care throughout its manifold ramifications ; and in which the national, or universal hero, be he soldier, politician or insurrectionist, is depicted realistically merely as the victim of that tyranny.

Such history would fail in its principal object if it were not understood to teach, among other things, the useful lesson that words and the ideas they embody, whether

false or true, can become tyrants far more dangerous and heartless than any human despot has ever been, and if it did not sufficiently emphasise the fact that, a false idea that has been made a universal possession, and the representative term of which has become a household word, is frequently a scourge more terrible than any plague that has ever yet decimated the species.

A child will travel some distance and wear itself out in overcoming any number of obstacles, if it be started off in pursuit of some alluring object by someone whose word its experience has not yet taught it to doubt. The alluring object may be entirely mythical—no matter! Granted that the object has been made to appear sufficiently desirable, the child will pursue its quest, sometimes with heroic perseverance. But is there anyone prepared to maintain that the full-grown adult would behave any differently under the influence of similar inducements? Allowing for the difference between the minds of children and of adults, and postulating for the adult an object which, though quite as chimerical as that chosen for the child, is yet of a kind calculated to fire his imagination, does anyone really question whether the adult's pursuit of it would be fully as eager and tenacious as that of the child?

Consider, for instance, the time-honoured method of obtaining votaries and adherents for any anti-social scheme. Certain states of mind or body are first posited by the agitators, or would-be reformers, as highly desirable; they are then shown to be unrealisable in the social scheme which it is

proposed to destroy ; and finally humanity is told that by destroying the social scheme already existing, those desirable states of mind or body will be procured and enjoyed. These hypothetical states of mind or body which are unrealisable in the social scheme selected for destruction may be entirely fantastic and unrealisable anywhere or how, but this objection the agitators do not trouble to discuss ; all they say is : “ Here we hold up before you certain desirable states of mind or body ” (call them, if you will, “ etherealness ” and “ imponderability,”—qualities that would enable those possessing them to overcome gravitation and all its concomittant inconveniences) “ these desirable states of mind or body can be obtained only by breaking up certain traditions. Break up these traditions, and you will possess them.”

It will be seen at once that the examples chosen, “ etherealness ” and “ imponderability,” are sufficiently extravagant to strike even the meanest intelligence as being absurd, and an anti-social agitator depending upon such desiderata alone would stand but a poor chance of gaining followers. Substitute the words representing these vaporous qualities, however, by another word which, though representing a quality equally illusory, nevertheless does not strike the average man immediately as being unrealisable, and the insidious operation of false desiderata straight-way becomes evident.

Most honest political thinkers have realised by now, for instance, how visionary and unreal is the accepted notion of the reign of “ Justice ”—not the justice that is ad-

ministered in our Courts of Law, or which we strive to exercise in daily life, but the *justice immanente* of Gambetta, already discussed, in which natural inequalities and their accompanying disabilities and inconveniences will be for ever removed or neutralised. But the glaring impossibility of this desideratum, and the consequent meaninglessness of the word used to designate it, does not seem to hinder millions from declaring themselves ready to fight and to lose their blood and their lives in trying to effect its realisation. And the same may be said of the ideas embodied in the words "Liberty," "Equality," "Fraternity," etc.

Given sufficient ingenuity in the agitator, therefore, it may be taken for granted that the grand method of fomenting social upheavals is: (1) to postulate a state of mind or body that is impossible in the society which it is intended to destroy—the fact that the particular mental or bodily state would be impossible in any society is either judiciously concealed, or else not known to the agitator; (2) to make the name for that particular state of mind or body a household word representing a universal desideratum; and (3) to exploit any existing disaffection, from whatever cause, in order to add momentum to the general desire to see this hypothetical state of mind or body realised by fair means or foul. In this way it is possible to make millions destroy opposing millions, and violence outrival violence, without anyone becoming aware, until too late, of the futility of the conflict and of the criminality of the hoax. Aye, in the exhaustion and confusion that

follow, people are necessarily so busy overcoming the multifarious difficulties that the struggle has created, that frequently they have not even the time, much less the composure, to ask themselves whether they have really obtained that for which they destroyed their fellows, their own homes, and their civilisation. It is in this way that false ideas often escape condemnation and exposure.

The tyranny of words and the ideas they represent, whether sound or unsound, is therefore obvious enough; and, in the history of peoples it is the principal tyranny of all. Beside it the tyranny of individual monarchs is mere child's play, and the deeds of a national hero only stage effect. Where the ideas have been false, however, where the desiderata striven and struggled for have been wholly chimerical, this tyranny stands for the most prodigious romanticism of human life,—a romanticism which, like all romanticism, has to be paid for very heavily, and the price of which is frequently the peace, happiness and order of centuries.

Now the extreme danger of the existing ideology of Europe and America is that it is full to bursting with romanticism precisely of this kind, and that in its catalogue of chimerical hopes, objects, and desiderata, there is also many a belief upon which it is impossible to base a sound code of conduct.

The romanticism of the ideology of Western Civilisation can be seen in no feature of modern life more plainly than in the manner in which modern man approaches the problems of his Age. The simple, the obvious,

the elementary solution, the solution nearest to hand, is never the first to be tried; frequently it is not even selected. Western Society believes in machinery in every form, it therefore approaches even its problems mechanically—that is to say, with instruments which, far from being primitive or human, are frequently so thoroughly unfitted to deal with the social wants and ailments of the time (all essentially primitive and human in their nature) that they actually aggravate and complicate these ailments and wants.

Much of this superficiality in statesmanship is due, of course, not so much to the prodigious romanticism of the Age, as to the mediocrity of those whom democratic representation and Parliamentary methods bring to the fore. A majority must consist of mediocre people, and mediocre people cannot exercise judgment except in a mediocre way. The person selected by mediocrities to represent them must therefore be a man capable of appealing to such people, that is to say, a creature entirely devoid of genius either for ruling or for any other function. As a matter of fact, all he need possess is a third-rate actor's gift for haranguing his electors about matters they can easily grasp, in language calculated to stimulate their emotions, and he must be guaranteed to hold or to express no original or exceptionally intelligent views.

As an instance of this mediocrity both of insight and initiative, observe the attitude of Western Governments to the phenomenon known as Social Unrest. It is either one of complete mystification, or else economic

remedies alone are thought of and applied.* With the example of Bolshevik Russia before them, Western Governments have doubtless learnt this easy lesson, that a people who have enough to eat are immune against revolutionary doctrine, and therefore that all questions of grave domestic disorder are primarily physical. It might be imagined, however, that this first step in wisdom would have led them still further afield, and even directed their attention to some of its less obvious consequences. For, if Bolshevik Russia teaches that a well-fed proletariat does not rise in revolt, it also proves, by implication, that the condition of the human body is an all-important factor to be reckoned with in domestic troubles. *The unit in a population manifesting signs of acute unrest may therefore be examined to some purpose with a view to ascertaining his physical condition.*

One of the most stubborn beliefs constituting the prodigious romanticism of modern times, is, however, a fatal obstacle in the road leading to this simple discovery; and this belief is that the physical condition of a man can be independent of his attitude of mind, and *vice versâ*. Apart from the one exception to this modern dogma, which has recently been learnt from Russia, and which is to the effect that starvation fomented revolt, the modern mind is more or less convinced that the physical condition of a population is not a very important factor in determining their political opinions.

*The possible spiritual causes of Social Unrest will be found discussed in Chapter VII.

True enough, when we hear anyone make a false claim, or pronounce a harebrained statement, we may ask in jest, "Is he well?"; but not one of us latter-day Europeans, or any creature like us, is convinced that the question is relevant. Since we do not approach with suspicion any specimen of our literature, our poetry, our art, or our philosophy which hails from dyspeptics, cripples, dypsomaniacs, or drug-maniacs, how could we regard such a question as relevant? The absurd levity with which we deal with the physical side of our national life is only one proof of this. It required a great war to prove to our emotional and opportunist Prime Minister, Mr. Lloyd George, that the physical condition of the nation was indeed "appalling," and it was only the work of the tribunals that brought home to him the extent of our national ill-health.* It may be presumed, therefore, that had not the Great War made the medical examination of our younger men necessary and imperative, our popular Premier would still be in ignorance concerning this all-important question.

Apart from actual starvation, therefore, no physical condition is regarded by modern man as an important factor in the etiology of a people's mental attitude.

And yet we have in the acute social unrest of England alone, a curious phenomenon, sufficiently hard to explain merely on economic lines. For it is not confined to people who are underfed or who do not know where to-morrow's loaf is coming from. It is not

* See his speech at Manchester on Sept. 12th, 1918.

even rooted in them. We find it manifesting itself principally among well-paid and perfectly comfortable artisans and skilled workmen—nay, it actually originates and draws its greatest strength from these elements in the population. Here, then, is a problem which no amount of material improvement in living conditions would appear to hold out any promise of solving. And yet everyone believes—aye, even the restless proletarians themselves are prepared to swear—that the trouble is chiefly economic; while some of the capitalist class might suggest, in addition to economic causes, Bolshevik, German or Socialistic propaganda or gold.

In a previous chapter the present writer has hinted at a number of causes, not altogether obvious, which may lie at the bottom of modern proletarian unrest; he now wishes to discuss that which he regards as one of the principal and most fundamental causes; and that he suggests straightway is *ill-health and debility*.

A jaundiced view of life, a pessimistic outlook, and a general mood of dissatisfaction with all things, may possibly in one or two enlightened and profound thinkers, have a purely intellectual basis. In such men it may be the outcome of a dispassionate and laborious survey of modern conditions and modern aims, and constitute a considered judgment based upon the available data. When, however, it characterises a multitude, particularly a multitude consisting largely of people who never in any circumstances form anything but an emotional opinion on any matter, it is simply wanton prejudice

and romanticism not to suspect and not to presuppose a partly physiological cause for the condition.

The fact that this cause is nowhere suspected, either by journalists, statesmen, Members of Parliament, or the working men of England themselves, does not make its operation any the less conspicuous; but it does show with what stubborn tenacity a false belief—a romantic belief particularly—clings to the minds of a people when once it has been sedulously inculcated upon them. For the fact that physiological causes are operating in the acute social unrest now prevailing in England alone, can be ascertained in two minutes by any one who wishes to examine this unrest at close quarters in the person of any workman representing it.

Any such investigator will discover very speedily that although the masses are probably adequately provided with food, as regards bulk, they are suffering from various forms of slight but sufficiently disturbing debility, owing to the two following causes:—

(a) The inferiority of a good deal of the food and drink they consume;

(b) Their gross ignorance regarding the proper way of preparing it.

Independent evidence pointing to the conclusion that food is at the bottom of the physiological causes of unrest, apart from an examination of that food itself, may be gathered from the appalling statistics of health recently published by the Ministry of National Service. The temptation in reading this report is to conclude that

unhealthy urban and industrial conditions are the cause of the general debility, of which only the acute cases are noticed in the report. But the compilers of the document itself carefully warn the reader against this facile explanation of the trouble. and call attention to the fact that ill-health is also very great in rural districts. Now, short of a plague, an epidemic, or a condition of universal degeneration, the only factor that can possibly account for ill-health and debility being general both in urban and rural centres, is either food or climate, either of which is common to both kinds of population. Dismissing climate as having been a more or less constant factor, we are therefore left with food.

(a) Now it is the present writer's conviction that much of the present debility of the masses, or at least enough of it to account for some discontent and disaffection, is to be ascribed to the inferiority of the foodstuffs they consume from their earliest infancy to the very end of their days.

In all cases where mothers cannot nurse their children, the trouble begins at the very dawn of life, and starts by disordering a system which is doomed to continuous disturbances until it can find ultimate release only in death. The Baby Welfare Centres recently established are all doing their utmost, it is true, to combat this evil, but they have to fight not merely against the ignorance of parents and of local doctors, but above all against the criminal unscrupulousness of commercial food proprietors. Everywhere advertisements are to be read concerning foods of which it is claimed

that they are an adequate substitute for mother's milk, and there is no law, no regulation, and no official system of instruction, to prevent ignorant mothers from being taken in by these means of publicity.

The organisations, small and inadequate as they are, which are attempting to fight this evil, are entirely the result of private enterprise. The Government of the country does nothing to secure infants against the double and pernicious operation of these two first enemies of life, Ignorance and its Commercial Exploitation. As growing children and adults, these infants continue under the debilitating influences of their earliest days by being fed on every kind of adulterated food, from impure bread to faked jam; and even when they have had the good fortune to have been reared at the breast, their regimen of inferior food in later life quickly undermines the solid basis of their constitutions.

It is impossible without some expert knowledge or advice to obtain for love or money a pure loaf of bread in many parts of England to-day.

The fat that is eaten with that bread, and which together with the bread forms a most important part of the food of working-class children, *when it consists of vegetable margarine, is almost useless to the body.*

The various tinned fruits and meats (except perhaps tomatoes) which are also much favoured among working-class women, owing to the ease with which they can be prepared for table, also constitute inferior food, owing to the method by which they are canned.

The jams, far from containing pure fruit, frequently contain no fruit at all.

Add to this, that the liquor—tea—which is chiefly drunk with these inferior foods, is in every way deleterious, being neither a food, nor a tonic, nor even an innocuous means of quenching thirst; and debility, far from being an exceptional occurrence, would seem almost an inevitable static condition of our masses.

(b) But what commercial adulteration of food, and the commercial production of inferior food, may sometimes fail to accomplish, the ignorance of the working-class housewife usually manages to consummate in the secret privacy of her kitchen.

There every imaginable error is perpetrated, even in dealing with first-class foods, such as butcher's meat and fresh vegetables; and the resulting deteriorated compounds only confirm, in the individual child or adult, a condition which by the adulteration of other foodstuffs we are doing our utmost to establish.

The ignorance among the female population of England, both rich and poor, regarding the *time* during which meat or vegetables, or milk, or fruit, or fats, can safely be allowed to boil, or to stew, or to simmer, without losing every particle of goodness they ever possessed, is frankly astonishing. One wonders how an occupation such as cooking could possibly have remained by tradition in the hands of a particular sex for generations, without more knowledge, more wisdom—even more rule-of-thumb wisdom—having collected around it, than has collected around the domestic

culinary practices of the British housewife.*

Not only is she ignorant of the right thing; she is deeply, firmly, self-righteously and aggressively convinced of the wrong. It is a compliment, an act of grace, to give your husband, your eldest daughter, or your visitor "a nice, strong cup of tea." Mutton is nicest when it has been boiled to shreds in an effort to attain tenderness. Curries are stimulating even with twice or thrice cooked meat as their most substantial ingredient. Cabbages and, in fact, all greens, should never be eaten *raw* (even the foolish local practitioner adds his mite of wisdom to the housewife's in pronouncing this practice injurious to the digestion), though this is really the only form in which they are useful and palatable to the human organism; they must be boiled and boiled in water softened with soda, until the obnoxious steam produced by the process infects the whole house, and ultimately whole streets and neighbourhoods.

Repletion being the principal object aimed at, the means of effecting it are not considered too nicely, and adequate quantities are provided, which, however, can only gravely disorganise and disturb the alimentary canal of all those who cloy their appetites by means of them.

In adult life, in addition to strong tea, there also enters the further disturbing in-

* In trying to account for this state of affairs, however, it should not be forgotten that the entrance of women into industry, among the proletariat, and feminism in the wealthier classes, have both accomplished a good deal in the matter of breaking valuable domestic traditions among women.

fluence of impure beer or spirits ; so that it is only with the most extreme good luck that any man, woman or youth in the working-classes, can maintain sufficient health to remain at their daily occupations, not to mention resist and throw off disease, enjoy life and keep good spirits.

No amount of tinkering at working-class children's teeth, or of careful scientific medical treatment, can ultimately cope with the steady deterioration, which year in and year out is being caused by the incessant consumption of inferior or badly prepared food in poor homes ; and yet it is in the highest degree romantic to suppose that by leaving this department of life alone, it will necessarily right itself.*

In fact, no belief in the whole ideology of " Democracy " is more pernicious and more crassly stupid than the belief that errors and false practices must in the end right themselves. The natural indolence of mankind in the mass very soon makes a supposed principle of this kind a popular and highly appreciated stand-by in the face of difficult problems, but it does not make it true. With the history of previous civilisations and races before us—civilisations and races which we are now convinced pursued error and false practices with the heartiest and most cheerful conviction to their ultimate doom—with the evidence of biology to hand, which shows us myriads of creatures, all the parasites in fact, having steadily descended from superior and more highly organised

*For a demonstration of the damage done to food by unskilful cooking, see the present writer's " Man's Descent from the Gods " (Heinemann, 1921).

creatures, merely through having followed the line of least resistance, it is difficult to account for the prevalence of this utterly stupid notion that evils and errors tend to right themselves. For of this we can feel quite certain, that all those peoples and races who do in fact believe, and act on the belief, that their errors will right themselves, will suffer not only extinction in their culture and civilisation, but also ultimate evanescence in themselves.

Thus, as we have seen, quite apart from the inferiority of the raw material she has to deal with, the working-class woman no longer knows the simplest rule of sound culinary science, and whatever wisdom might still have survived by pure tradition in the kitchens of the poor, has been satisfactorily suppressed by the innovations of commerce and industry.

To deny that the existing food conditions have any bearing upon the spirit and therefore the temper and the outlook of the nation, is to support the doctrine that a man's physical condition can be independent of his attitude of mind.

Nobody would claim that the peculiar virulence of modern Social Unrest is entirely to be accounted for by the debility of the masses, or that this debility is entirely due to faulty nourishment; but, on the other hand, it would be obviously absurd to attempt to put an end to Social Unrest without giving very serious attention to the people's debility, or without examining one of its chief contributory causes, which is bad food. And any legislative measure, or economic readjustment or reform which

is brought about without some drastic provisions calculated to meet this important factor in the trouble, is bound to end in failure.

The temperance movement is nothing more than a helpless and non-statesmanlike solution on Puritan lines of the liquor side of the food question. What is required is obviously not the abolition of fermented liquor, for that would be tantamount to depriving the people of a necessary food-stuff,* but such reforms in the liquor trade as will secure pure drinks to the masses of the nation.

It is the present writer's conviction that if the Governments of Europe could secure absolutely pure bread and pure fermented drinks to their various peoples, the gravity of social unrest would immediately be relieved. Granted that pure bread and pure fermented liquor would only constitute a beginning (for there are numbers of other foodstuffs that are adulterated), nevertheless, it would be a good beginning; for bread is the principal food of the working classes, and a sound, healthy beverage added to it would go a long way towards rehabilitating their constitutions.

The fermented liquor recommended by the present writer would be the old English ale of pre-Puritan days, the ale which besides being free from the pernicious properties of hops, was made from pure *unboiled* malt. The vice of modern beer does not consist only in the fact that it contains properties that are injurious to the human body, such as hops or the many harmful substitutes

* For proofs in support of this statement, see the present writer's work already referred to on p. 193.

that are used instead of hops, and other ingredients* ; but chiefly in the fact that it is prepared from boiled wort, that is to say, wort from which heat has removed all possible trace of the necessary *vitamines* so valuable to health. The brewers' objection to a re-introduction of the old ale of pre-Puritan England will of course be this, that it *will not keep*. But what does that matter? There are hundreds of foodstuffs that won't keep. Does that justify our removing all their most vital properties in order to make them keep? Milk will not keep. Does that prevent it from being purveyed retail to every householder in England every day? The immense value of the old ale of England as a food and health-giving beverage ought alone to ensure its supersession over the utterly worthless "beer" that is universal at the present day† ; and the fact that in combination with pure bread, it would restore to modern people the staple articles of diet of our mighty peasants of the Poitiers and Agincourt period, should be enough to recommend it.

Very soon after the legal restoration of these two precious foods to the masses, the legislation could be extended to include other foodstuffs, and also to provide in

* By the Free Mash Tun Act of 1880 the regulations for charging the duty were so framed as to leave the brewer practically unrestricted as to the description of malt, or corn, or sugar, or other description of saccharine substitutes which he might use in the manufacturing and colouring of beer.

† For a confirmation of this statement, see p. 61 of the Medical Research Committee's Report on Accessory Food Factors. For a more elaborate discussion upon the whole subject of old English Ale, see the present writer's *Defence of Aristocracy*, Chapter V.

the elementary schools for some kind of instruction concerning the value and sound preparation of the principal foods. And then, it is the present writer's firm belief, Governments would find themselves so appreciably relieved of "social reform" problems, and of the incessant demand for measures required to redress some grievances among the labouring classes, that they might find more time to attend to questions of development and reconstruction, all of which remain adjourned and neglected from one generation to the next.

But, for this "physiology" of Social Unrest to be understood, and for its problems to be tackled, the physique of our race will require to be regarded very much more seriously than it is at present, and prejudices will have to be overcome which are as deep-rooted as they are old. There are very few of us to-day who do not cling fanatically to that romantic ideology according to which the body of man, together with its condition, seems out of all proportion less important than his mind and his soul. There are few of us to-day who are sufficiently primitive, sufficiently instinctive, to feel the same horror at the sight of sickness in a human being as we feel at the sight of sickness in an animal. Our bias, therefore, is all against tracing what appears to be only a matter of discontent, like Social Unrest, partly to a bodily cause. But it is precisely for a false belief of this kind that mankind always has paid, and always will pay, most dearly; for even in the uprooting of it, apart from the harm it does, much pain and frequently much sorrow is incurred. It

behoves us, therefore, to enquire whether we do not now know too much, whether we are not now suffering too much, any longer to refuse to explore any avenue of reform along which it can be shown with some plausibility that we may find some solution of our troubles; and even if, in order to take this step, we have to question a very much cherished ideology, we may, after all, find ourselves none the poorer for having made this daring venture, if in the end we find that ideology to have been false.

At all events, the effort partially to solve the problem of Social Unrest on the lines suggested in this chapter cannot in any circumstances prove wholly fruitless; for while everybody may not agree that food conditions in England are alarmingly bad, none it may be presumed will question the expediency of improving them, even if this be attempted simply with the object of perfecting and developing the race. All those, however, who realise the deep and constant relationship between bodily conditions and mental outlook, and who are moreover aware of the immense disadvantages to which modern industrial conditions, quite apart from the inherited debility of their past, expose the masses of every Western people, must welcome any reform which promises to remove even one among the multitude of adverse circumstances conspiring to impoverish and to undermine the vitality of modern nations, and hail with some satisfaction a solution, which, while being practical, yet involves no drastic upheaval of our social organisation.

CHAPTER IX

THE GREAT ALTERNATIVE TO SOCIAL REFORM

“ Ay, if dynamite and revolver leave you courage to be wise :

When was age so crammed with menace ? Madness ?
Written, spoken lies ? ”

TENNYSON—(*Locksley Hall, Sixty Years After.*)

IT has been man's besetting sin, almost throughout history, to trace whatever evils might befall him, rather to his institutions, his social systems and his conditions, than to himself and his fellows. Many a precious scheme of life, many a sound system, has been broken up and abandoned, not because of its inherent badness, or of the incorrigible vices of its design, but owing to the fact that those men who attempted to carry it on in its last days, were neither as able nor as vigorously endowed as those who inaugurated it and laid its foundations.

Institutions may thus outlive the quality of men, although the reverse of this proposition, that men outlive the quality of institutions, is always taken for granted.

If we saw a man of our acquaintance forsake house after house, however perfectly designed and beautifully appointed ; if we saw him wander from town to town, from country to country, and even from continent to continent, always leaving the best for something else and yet never feeling at ease ; furthermore, if we noticed that he dropped friend after friend, relative after relative, all

in bitter enmity and anger, we might be excused if we felt tempted to suspect that his repeated changes and upheavals were not the fault either of his houses, his various adopted towns or countries, or his friends and relatives, but were due to some obscure infirmity in the man himself, some hidden though serious hepatic affection, which rendered him radically unfit to be happy or contented anywhere.

And we should arrive at this conclusion, not necessarily out of any feeling of bitterness or hostility towards him personally, but rather because we should consider it irrational, in the face of such chronic restlessness and irascibility, to ascribe all the blame consistently and repeatedly to his conditions, and not occasionally to the man himself.

Now it is a most remarkable thing that in the contemplation of similar repeated changes in the life of a nation or a people, the average observer is not nearly so prone to be guided by the highest standards of rational thinking. On the contrary, as often as changes take place, he is prepared to ascribe the necessity for the change, not to the inferiority of the men who ushered it in, but always to the inferiority of the institutions or systems that were superseded. The unsupported prejudice involved in the idea of "Progress" compels him, as it were, to assume that, since all changes must be for the better, any change that has occurred in our social system or our institutions in the past must of necessity imply a just condemnation of the systems or institutions that formerly existed.

Never does the average observer dream of suspecting that the proposed change of a system or of an institution may be the surest

possible proof of the inferiority of the men who are trying to carry it on. Inferiority to what?—Inferiority to the men who originally founded the system or institution.

Now the prevalence of this curious bias ought to make everyone profoundly suspicious of all those who clamour for radical alterations in our established systems and institutions. In any case it ought to make every thinking man demur before he acquiesces too readily in the conclusion that it is our institutions and systems that are wrong, and not man himself.

For, suppose that the men who declare things are wrong, merely confess their own inferiority by this declaration, how can their recommendation regarding a new order of society be accepted with confidence? How can anyone hope that their schemes can possibly be better than those they have shown themselves incapable of continuing?

At all moments, then, when there is much loud talking about the transformation of society and the modification or overthrow of her institutions, the wise reformer, the cautious innovator, will turn his scrutiny upon man himself, and endeavour to find out first what reforms and improvements must take place in him, before any scheme of society whatsoever, no matter how perfect, can hope to be a success.

And it is in this direction that the present writer hopes that research and inquiry will be prosecuted in the immediate future. The examination of institutions and systems is not nearly as important at the present juncture as the examination of modern man himself, and if this examination be conducted

on the principle *that it is possible for institutions to outlive the quality of man*, certain valuable and extremely fruitful discoveries cannot fail to be made.

For instance, in a previous chapter it was pointed out that a mood of stubborn dejection had fallen upon civilised man, and it was suggested that this was due to the complete collapse of the ideals, beliefs, and principles, by which he had allowed himself to be inspired and led for many generations. Now if this analysis be correct, it might be profitable to inquire into the origin and nature of ideals, beliefs and principles; and if, as the present writer does not doubt, it were found that man's ideals, beliefs, and guiding principles are always created for him by the great examples of his species, it might be asked why the human species has ceased from producing great examples. What has come over man that he should have suffered a collapse of his leading ideals, beliefs and principles, and yet have no one to give him others in their place? Has the species suffered a general decline? Has it sent forth its highest shoots, and is it now exhausted?

And, if these questions seemed to be sufficiently solemn and important to be pursued with energy and resolution, the causes of racial exhaustion might possibly become the subject of special investigation. A provisional question mark might be set against every modern ideal and value, in order to determine whether perhaps it might not be responsible for the social exhaustion of civilised man.

So far from assuming that all our institutional changes have necessarily been pro-

gressive, the value to the race of every more or less recent innovation might be tested and proved.

For instance, the nature of "democracy" might be treated critically. It might be questioned whether there is not in all democratic order a tendency to reduce and truncate the ultimate gamut of human capabilities. While population has multiplied as never before, under the democratic régime, it might be questioned, perhaps with some profit, whether any section of this increasing mass of humanity, or any individual of that section, has attained to that old magnitude, in volition, intellect and health, which human nature once regarded as easily within the compass of its powers. And if the investigation of this question seemed ultimately to point to a negative reply, it might then become necessary to weigh the alleged advantages of democratic principles against the consequences to man of this ascertained loss of greatness and lofty capabilities.

Again, the whole of our accepted notions of charity, humaneness and compassion, might be subjected to a searching inquiry. Since it is a certain unknown but suspected infirmity of man that may be the cause of his complete dissatisfaction with his institutions and systems, nothing, however sacred, should be left unscrutinised, untested. It might be asked whether we have not been wrong all the time to allow our second-rate, third-rate, fourth-rate, and x-rate fellow creatures to multiply and to live in our midst unbranded. In view of the alarming reports on the nation's health recently published by the Government ; in view of the fact that a

British Prime Minister, and no society crank or faddist, has found it necessary to warn us that an "A1 nation cannot be built up out of C3 men"; in view, moreover, of the immense burden that the nation shoulders annually for the maintenance of lunatics, incurables, cripples, and other congenital degenerates, it might be asked, almost with trepidation, whether the healthy sections of the nation are even now plentiful enough and vigorous enough to be saved and secured from further infection.

Since we have been brought to this pass by the most sacred ideals and principles of the past, these ideals and principles would require to be reverently taken up and examined.

Again with regard to the idea of non-selective human multiplication,—apart from any suspicion it may have incurred of increasing disease or degeneration,—it might reasonably be questioned whether any species of animal could for long allow itself the liberties that we have allowed ourselves, in fostering undesirable examples of our kind and in scientifically persuading even the half-reluctant to live, without ultimately having to pay for it very severely indeed. What breed of sheep, what breed of horses, what breed of common barn-fowl, could have been abandoned to the promiscuous mating alone (not to mention other errors) to which modern man has long been abandoned, without suffering ultimate degeneration?

A very fruitful method of inquiry would consist in investigating to what extent modern society may have failed as an organism through pursuing too ardently survival values alone, uncontrolled by aesthetic sur-

vival values. In plain English, has modern man pursued survival at all costs, even at the cost of caring *how* he survived, or what manner of man he was when he did survive? The check of the aesthetic survival values might have prevented many a step, which though it insured the survival of abundant numbers, yet removed some grace, some desirable quality, from the form or mind of man.*

Biologists tell us that organisms frequently survive in the animal kingdom at the cost of qualities, which, from the human standpoint may seem eminently desirable. Thus the tape-worm is said to be the descendant of a race that once led a nobler and more independent existence. Survival is thus frequently purchased at too heavy a cost. Is it possible that by the observance of survival values alone, unchecked by aesthetic values, man has lost, or is rapidly losing, valuable qualities that once made a higher and more lasting kind of civilisation possible?

The daily lives, the food and the drink of the whole population, particularly its rural elements, might be advantageously criticised from the standpoint of their body-building and health-giving qualities; also from the standpoint of their ultimate influence in moulding the mind and tempering the heart of the people. After many centuries of over-emphasis of the soul's importance, attention might be bestowed with pre-Puritan fervour upon the body and its needs.

In these various ways might the scrutiny of earnest and profound reformers be pro-

* For an exhaustive discussion of survival values as compared with aesthetic survival values see *Man's Descent from the Gods* (Heinemann) Chapter IX.

fitably concentrated upon the most probable cause of the apparent decay and disease of modern institutions and systems,—that is to say, upon man himself, and upon the noble and stirring task of making him once more whole, if it is indeed his infirmity from which civilisation is suffering. In this direction alone is there any hope ; in this direction alone is there any practical chance of achieving lasting success.

The immense difficulties that the problem of man himself immediately presents, need not deter even the most faint-hearted from embarking upon the enterprise ; for it is surely possibly even for the most craven to be induced to choose between two alternatives. And what is the alternative to the measures here proposed ? — To continue tinkering at mankind's institutions and systems, as we have been doing for the last three hundred years ? To continue tampering with society's laws and customs instead of with her units ? These methods may sound more simple and more commensurate with the powers of blundering and childish fingers, but is the simpler, the easier method, always to be the more *practical*, merely because it is simple and easy, and quite irrespective of its ultimate effectiveness ? Is " practical " synonymous with elementary or infantile ? Is a procedure " practical " because it appeals immediately and vividly to a room full of babies ?

Precisely because the true causes of modern anarchy, disaffection and disunion, probably lie much deeper beneath the surface than established social and economic conditions, there is a danger that the latter will

be seized upon and shattered, in the endeavour to achieve reform. The blindest can apprehend their existence, and to the blind, holding is seeing.

But, if the infirmity is man's, how can it be "practical" to reform his institutions and systems? You might as well begin rebuilding your palaces because your monarchs have failed you.

Nor can it be argued with any cogency, at this time of day, either that the materials are not to hand for pursuing the inquiries outlined above, or that the prescriptions for a recovery of man's lost quality have not been foreshadowed if not definitely specified. Of modern and ancient thinkers there have been enough to show, at least in broad outline, the methods that should be adopted for almost any contingency. Nobody would deny that the undertaking bristles with immense difficulties, but even if the science that will help us to accomplish it had to be created *pari passu* with our attempts at overcoming these difficulties it would still be worth while, since it is quite possible that it is the only great alternative.

So much for *man* as the suspected primary cause of the malady of modern civilisation.

If now we turn to other details (other than material and economic conditions of course) in the fabric of modern life, which would strike even the most myopic as requiring instant correction, they spring in such profusion before our eyes, that it would be impossible in the compass of this small and elementary treatise, to refer to any except the most salient.

One of the most salient is the absurd

attempt that society has made during the last, or commercial and industrial era, in modern Europe, to build a harmonious and united community upon the principle of *cleavage*. Doomed to failure from the start, as it was, this vice of cleavage, that is at the root of the failure of modern society, has not yet,—no, not even at this late hour,—been recognised and condemned by all.

Let it be thoroughly understood what is here meant by the principle of cleavage. Cleavage is not to be confused with classification. You may subject your children or your parents to classification, while they are all hanging affectionately on each other's necks; but if you group them by cleavage, the idea "asunder," is bound to follow. The classification of a population, therefore, does not necessarily leave any clefts or chasms between the classes. If, however, you proceed by dividing up your population on the principle of cleavage, definite clefts or chasms between the groups are inevitable; and this is the principle upon which the commercial and industrial Age has worked.

As the result either of the ridiculous pomposity of those who have acquired riches by commerce or industry, or else of the questionable title to superiority that wealth alone confers, a curious phenomenon began to be noticeable in England during the course of the latter half of the 17th century,—and that was a certain artificial and asinine haughtiness among the well-to-do, which made them unable to unbend in the presence of those whose purses were less portentously swollen. It is suggested that this became noticeable in the latter half of the 17th

century ; but, truth to tell, all the causes of it were in existence in the middle of the previous century as the result of Henry VIII.'s vulgar and disastrous reign. Most authorities would, however, admit that the phenomenon, as a marked innovation, became noticeable only in the 17th century.

Theretofore, wealth and good breeding, wealth and good family, wealth and sound instinct, wealth and good manners, had, with but few and notorious exceptions, been the only kinds of wealth known.

Suddenly, however, with the capitalistic exploitation of the land, the nation's mineral resources, and her people, a new kind of wealth came into existence, wealth utterly unconnected with anything except the most solemn and most self-complacent vulgarity in those who possessed it.

These people, unable to rely upon those natural distinctions that everybody recognises at once, which compel the inferior or the fool instinctively to refrain from importunacies, and restrain the too familiar hand, were forced to adopt a new method of holding their brethren, so like themselves in all but brass, satisfactorily aloof. How did they accomplish this ? Since they had no natural dignity no innate distinction, which might have allowed them to befriend the poor with impunity, without any fear that is to say, of "losing caste" ; since they could not be classified apart from their poorer fellows except by means of the ticket "wealth" ; they invented barriers and gulfs which were designed to be as wide and insuperable as their fear of being taken for their poorer fellows was great. Being unable to rely

upon classification, they proceeded by means of cleavage.

This foolish and foolhardy expedient on the part of the vulgar rich, which has survived to this day, has led to the absurd anomaly of a society,—a community if you please,—in which a whole complicated series of stratified groups, never meet, never in any circumstances communicate with one another, except with the most ludicrous grimaces, compressed lips, whispers, frowns, embarrassment, fear, contempt, and hatred.

The wonder is, not that society constituted on these lines is now falling to pieces; the miracle is that it should have lasted so long.

Think of it! Think of the advantage of friendly and free communication! Think of how much is gained, even among equals, by constant and unrestrained intercourse! Reckon the inestimable profit that a man of minor attainments can derive from free and easy association with his superior, and *vice versâ*. And then ponder the thousands of unbreakable links that such relationships would have forged between the classes in every village, town, city, country and province throughout the Empire!

When is it that a man ceases to believe in natural distinctions between men? When is it he begins to suspect that there is nothing above him?—Only when, for a very long time, he has been deprived of any intimate knowledge of superiority, or of any association with superiority in his own form.

Can we wonder at the absurd decoy cries of modern Europe,—at the cry for Equality above all? Can we marvel any longer at class hatred? How does a man best learn

the fundamental law of natural inequality?—Only by moving out of his circle and finding a sufficiently friendly welcome when he does so, to be able to learn from what he sees.

The principle of cleavage instead of classification,—this is one of the vices for which we have to thank the vulgar rich of the past, and their kith and kin of the present day. But it is one of the first brutal stupidities that must be abolished if anything approaching an orderly and harmonious society is to be established.

Another salient error of modern society, at least in England, has been the consistent indifference shown by successive Governments towards the steady encroachment of the huge cities of the nation upon their rural environs. Like monster cankers these vast urban complexes of England are allowed to spread north, south, east and west, year in, year out, as if for all the world, it were an advantage, a boon, in fact the most unspeakable blessing, that every inch of green pasture land, of golden cornfield, should be converted as quickly as possible into muddy, smoky, stuffy and hideous thoroughfares.

If town life were so eminently desirable, if the kind of man and woman who live and breed amid city and suburban shoddy, were without question the proudest examples of the nation's blood; if town occupations, town temptations, and town pastimes were the healthiest, the most ennobling, the most productive of useful virtues, we might suspect the various Governments, that have tolerated the spread of this urban miasma, to have winked their eye knowingly at what was,

after all, only a sentimental grievance, a sort of poet's plaint, an artist's loss of picturesque compositions.

But seeing that nowadays one is reduced almost to wandering about hat in hand begging for *one*,—just one,—redeeming point in favour not only of town life, town conditions and town charms, but also of one's own fellow townsmen themselves; it must strike people as a little odd that the accredited authorities for generations should have been so completely lacking in any definite policy concerning this all-important question.

Is England to become one long ugly street, full of ugly, toothless people, pretending that their clammy urban passions are something more exalted than the rut of rats?

You would have thought that a consideration of the food situation alone, apart from any other aspect of the matter, would have induced the rulers of the nation, long ago, to adopt some means to encourage rural, and to discourage urban life; and yet, as if with malice prepense, all the efforts of past Governments have secretly been made in the very opposite direction.

One is almost inclined to cavil less at the growth of urban centres and their unwieldy proportions, than at the absurd lack of policy towards this question which continues to be shown by the legislature.

If it be a desirable movement, then by all means promote it openly; if, on the other hand, it can only fill every patriot's breast with alarm, then, be sure to frame a definite policy about it, and do so quickly.

The present writer can only see disaster

ahead, if these large urban centres are allowed to spread any further, and he would feel inclined to inaugurate immediately, a movement for strictly circumscribing their area. Concurrently with this drastic move, he would encourage by all means in his power, the adoption of rural occupations and homes by the proletariat.

“But what about the increasing population?” cry a hundred voices,—as if an increasing population were a sort of elemental phenomenon like the rising tide, or the waxing and waning of the moon, that no man can help.

The reply to this question brings the author to the last of the matters of detail with which he proposes to deal, and therefore to his concluding remarks.

The question of population, like that of the relative desirability of urban or rural life, is one to which it is madness to maintain an attitude of indifference or unconcern. The rulers of this country can as little afford to ignore the consideration of the multiplication of its inhabitants, as they can afford to ignore the consideration of the nation's finances. And the more the State arrogates to itself the rôle of a beneficent and divine Providence,—that is to say, the more it interferes with the natural consequences of improvidence in the matter of bringing forth children, either by helping indigent parents, or by mitigating the hardships of the unmarried mother, the more it is entitled to impose and to inflict penalties upon irresponsible and wanton procreators of children.

If this is true of the healthy and the sound, however, how much more true ought it to be

of the unhealthy and the degenerate ! Again, in regard to them, if the State takes upon itself to shoulder the burden of indigent degenerates of all kinds, it is entitled to impose limits upon their multiplication. He who pays may lay down his conditions.

And this would remain true, whether the present system were to be maintained, or whether it were superseded within the next quarter of a century by Bolshevism or Communism.

Since it is the iron law of population that multiplication follows any easing of the conditions of the indigent, either by making earlier marriages a possibility, or by making the consequences of early marriages tolerable, it follows that all Governments, whether Capitalistic, Bolshevist, or Communistic, if they undertake to succour the indigent, whose families exceed their resources, must in the end impose certain limits upon multiplication. And where they take over the whole burden as they do in this country, of indigent lunatics and other degenerates, they have the right to exercise all the means at their command for preventing degenerates from being born.

Communists and Bolshevists may scout this question, just as dishonest vote-catching past Governments have done ; but let a Labour Government come permanently into power, let a Bolshevist minority attempt to rule this country, and it would soon discover, what all creditable thinkers know already, that the question of population is one about which even the most benign government *must* frame some definite policy. Indeed it would soon discover the fact, which will

perhaps only become apparent to all in many years to come : that a truly benign policy in this matter is one which at present would strike all sentimentalists, and other Utopians as hopelessly ruthless and inhuman.

It is in the procreation of children that a man and woman's sense of responsibility first encounters its crucial test. For generations in this country, men and women's sense of responsibility in this matter has been systematically undermined ; and, as regards the procreation of degenerates, of the unhealthy, and of the insane, it might be said that there is literally no conscience left in modern man concerning this crime.

It will behove all serious and patriotic governments in the future, therefore, whether they are capitalistic or Bolshevik, to face this pressing problem of modern times, and the vandalistic work of centuries,—the destruction of the English working man and woman's sense of responsibility in regard to procreation,—will by hook or by crook have to be repaired, and a new conscience regarding this matter created in the breasts of all.

Thus the tasks hinted at in this short chapter are seen to be stupendous enough, and yet which of them can possibly be accomplished simply by the wand of the Communist, Bolshevik, or economic social reformer ?

Let no one imagine, however, that because they are beset with the most serious difficulties, that they are therefore to be discarded as "unpractical." We know the extremes of stupidity to which so-called "practical politics" has led us. Nothing is practical, that in practice does not achieve

the end desired. And since the mere change of our institutions and systems cannot even graze the surface of these deeper causes of unhappiness, it is simply conjuring and buffoonery to call "practical" only those measures of reform or reconstruction, which every gallery of schoolboys, every crowd of holiday-makers, can recognise at a glance as at least "something done."

THE END.

INDEX

- Abstract terms, importance of, 12; have no uniform meaning to-day, 13, 14, 19; to teach meaning of, leads to instruction in true ideas, 149.
- Advertisement, unscrupulous, of commercial foods, 188, 189.
- Æsthetic values disregarded to-day, 205.
- Agitators, their unscrupulous use of words, 181, 182.
- Ale, old English, the value of, 195, 196; the brewers' objection to, 196.
- Amputation, resorted to in desperation by the weary, 30.
- Aristotle, on the desirability of a liberal education, 127 *n*.
- Beer, impure, 193; harmful properties of, 195; utterly worthless, 196.
- Beliefs, *see* Ideals.
- Bishop of London, his misuse of words, 16.
- Bolshevism, a conspiracy against life, 35; insists on compulsory labour, 93; offers only material ideals, 162.
- Bolshevist, the, an invalid, 31; a determined opponent of life, 36.
- Brahmin, the, highly respected though poor, 40.
- Bread, pure loaf of, unobtainable in many parts of England, 190.
- Cabbage, should be eaten raw, 192.
- Catachresis, the rule in journalism, 16; much false doctrine is, 134.
- Charles I., an ideal monarch, 122.
- Charwomen, charitable, do not go out on missions of comfort to the rich, 168.
- Church, the, its failure to teach sound views about life and humanity, 129; of the Middle Ages protected the poor and ignorant, 135; had a sense of responsibility, 135.
- Cities, large, breed misanthropy, 174, 175; mistake of allowing, to spread indefinitely, 211—213.
- Citizen, the desirable, must be well conducted, 126.
- Cleavage, the industrial Age has worked upon the principle of, 208; the expedient of the vulgar rich, 210, 211; must be abolished if harmony is to be restored, 211.
- Communism, a conspiracy against Life, 35; its unscrupulous appeal to malcontents, 112; offers only material ideals, 162.
- Condorcet, not a thinker but a mathematician, 67.
- Cro-Magnons, doubtful whether modern man is better or better off than the, 158.
- Culture, a common, produces a common tongue, 11; might be saved by a re-definition of words, 26.
- David, his moral insistence on justice, 47, 48.
- Decline, means retrograde development, 34.
- Definition, of words desirable, 21; and might avert revolution 25, 26.
- Degenerates, hate Life as she is, 59.
- Democratic institutions, put a damper on superiority, 174, 203.
- De Quincey, on poetry, 83.

218 FALSE ASSUMPTIONS OF "DEMOCRACY"

- Despondency, prevalent to-day, 153; national, leads to social unrest, 155; not due to a material cause alone, 157; but to a lack of satisfying ideals, 158, 159, 161; the only cure for, new values and a new faith, 161; economic changes cannot cure, 163; due to false values, 173; cannot be cured by social reform, 177.
- Development, the law of higher life, 33, 34.
- Disease, European attitude of toleration towards, totally wrong, 173.
- Disraeli, his speech on the Compensation for Disturbance Bill, 95.
- Education, failure of modern, 123; the object of State, the rearing of worthy citizens, 126; should be a training in manners rather than in the acquisition of facts, 127, 128; elementary, does not teach sound views about Life and Humanity, 129—131; does not even succeed in teaching means of intercourse, 131; importance of knowledge of native tongue in, 132; elementary, an expensive farce, 143.
- Education Act of 1870, introduced cheap literature, 15.
- Emigration, the violence of, 107.
- English, importance of teaching, 145; better teachers wanted for, 146.
- Equality, quite meaningless to-day, 24; the cry of, can provoke real emotion, 61; originally borrowed from mathematics, 62; and has no meaning except in mathematics, 65, 76; of opportunity, the fallacy of, 67--71; not desired by the beautiful, able or desirable, 72; a powerful weapon in the hands of the discontented, 73; due to indolence and a belief in Justice, 74; had a definite meaning at the end of the 18th century, 75; a decoy cry when superiority is extinct, 210.
- Errors, do not right themselves, 194.
- Eugenists, their moral interpretation of phenomena, 47, 48.
- Fatalism, the, of modern Europe, 95.
- Feminism, has broken valuable domestic traditions, 192 *n*.
- Food, inferior, purveyed to the masses, 123; ill-prepared, at bottom of physiological causes of ill-health and social unrest, 188, 189, 190, 194, 197; unscrupulous advertisements of commercial, 188, 189; suggested reforms in, 195; question of, should lead to discouragement of urban development, 212.
- Freedom, Rousseau's misunderstanding of, 17; now meaningless, 21, 23; but provokes wild enthusiasm, 22; Rousseau's idea of, 22; a wildly fantastic idea, 77; babies have no, to choose their destiny, 78; a will o' the wisp in manhood, 80; non-existent even in childhood, 81; strength has no, 83—85; the cry of the weak, 84, 85; the only circumstances when it can have any meaning, 86—89, 92, 94; the frequency of these circumstances, 88; real, greater under the Tudors than now, 90; political, a deception, 90—92.
- Gambetta, his "*justice imminente*," 44, 45, 182; a sentimentalist, 57;
- Gissing, George, on the comparative happiness of the poor, 169.
- Happiness, is relative, 169; has little to do with material conditions, 170, 172.
- Humanitarianism, an inverted form of cruelty, 174.

- Ideals, lack of satisfying, leads to social unrest, 158, 159, 161 ; loss of, makes words connected with them meaningless, 160 ; tyranny of, the most powerful, 179, 180, 183.
- Ill-health, Lloyd George on national, 186, 204 ; a fundamental cause of social unrest, 187, 188, 194 ; great in rural districts owing to bad food, 189 ; an inevitable static condition of the masses, 191.
- Indolence, may avert disaster in England but not on the Continent 24 ; demands equality, 74.
- Industrialism, creates besotting occupations, 89.
- Institutions, often outlive the quality of men, 199—202.
- Japan, suicide in, 175.
- Jefferson, imbibed much nonsense from France, 61 *n* ; a disciple of Condorcet, 67.
- Journalism, a cause of present day muddle, 15 ; makes catachresis the rule, 16.
- Justice, quite meaningless to-day, 24 ; necessary for belief in equality, 44, 74 ; the abstraction of a moralist, 45 ; Gambetta's *justice immanente*, 44, 45, 132 ; modern idea of, 46 ; and its moral basis, 46—50 ; meaningless when applied to the universe, 52 ; unknown outside human society, 53, 54 ; a myth, 57, 58 ; reign of, a visionary ideal, 181.
- Labour, dissatisfaction of, 155.
- Language, confusion of, leads to revolution, 14, 15, 17 ; and to impossibility to lead or be led, 15 ; disease of, everywhere rampant, 25 ; importance of understanding one's own, 133, 134 ; a knowledge of, the only means of curbing the press, 136 ; the English, should be chief subject in State schools, 137, 140.
- Liberty, quite meaningless to-day, 24.
- Life, has a descending tendency, 33 ; development the law of higher, 33 ; hopelessly unjust and unmoral, 51—53 ; as she is, hated by degenerates, 59 ; the enjoyment of, largely æsthetic, 117 ; inequality necessary to the charm of, 118 ; itself attacked by the Socialist, 119.
- Lloyd George, on national ill-health, 186.
- Locke, John, put learning last in education, 127 *n*.
- Love, cannot be produced by word of command, 175, 176.
- Luther, a slave to his own strength, 83.
- Man, Rousseau's misunderstanding of, 17, 18, 23 ; modern, tired in body and spirit, 27—29 ; his sickness and degeneracy responsible for decline of our institutions, 31 ; made responsible by moralists for the injustices of Life, 50 ; his moral interpretation of the world, 51 ; modern, essentially democratic, 96 ; and suffering from exhaustion, 156 ; man, not his institutions wrong to-day, 201—202 ; all reform should begin with, himself, 206, 207.
- Manners, education in, most essential, 127 ; no attention given to, in elementary education, 128, 129, 131 ; lack of, falls with greater severity on poor than on rich, 129.
- Margarine, vegetable, almost useless to the body, 190.
- Mathematician, the, a hopeless psychologist, 62 ; dangerous as soon as he deals with humanity, 67.

220 FALSE ASSUMPTIONS OF "DEMOCRACY"

- Mediocrities, alone "free" to choose a calling, 80.
Mediocrity, can only rule in a mediocre way, 184.
Middle Ages, had a common culture, 12; protected the poor and ignorant, 134.
Mill, John Stuart, proved that Parliament is not representative, 91, 92 *n*.
Misanthropy, bred by overcrowding of large cities, 174--175.
Monks, the mendicant, lost power when they became rich, 41.
- Napoleon, on the cause of the Revolution, 72; and the lawyers, 82; a slave to his own strength, 83; what freedom meant to, 86.
Nature, misunderstood by Rousseau and the Victorian poets, 17, 18; utterly immoral, 51--53; innately unjust, 55, 59; violence supreme in, 99.
Negro slaves, committed suicide on British ships, 175.
- Parliament, quite unrepresentative, 91, 92.
Pessimism, takes form of economic struggle among the masses and madness and religious fervour among the rich, 162. *See also* Despondency.
Pessimist, the, can alone logically assail Private Property, 36.
Physical conditions, disregarded by modernity, 186.
Poor, the, know certain truths owing to their contact with reality, 130; social reform directed towards, alone, 165; not more unhappy than the rich, 166--169.
Population, problem of growth of, 213; definite policy necessary regarding, 214; a ruthless policy regarding, probably necessary, 215.
Poverty, to-day entails besotting and heartrending work, foul surroundings and ignorance, 39.
Power, the proper equipment of, 42.
"Practical," the password of the stupidest beliefs, 178 *n*; the foolishness of, reforms, 216.
Press, the, its enormous power to-day, 134; does not protect the poor and ignorant, 135; has no sense of responsibility, 136; a knowledge of language the only means of curbing the, 136; modern education leads to omnipotence of, 137.
Private property assailed by present Muddle Age, 31; a principle of Life, 32, 35; the principle of, still believed in by the masses, 32, 35; can be logically assailed only by the pessimist, 36; among animals, 36; abuse of, to-day, 37; the oldest of human principles, 38; evil results of, to-day, 38--39; but these not inherent in the principle of, 40.
Procreation, injustice rooted in the very act of, 56, 57; means violence, 102--113, 125; society cannot regulate, 109; inadvisable to meddle with, 112; limitation of, or deliberate sacrifice can alone eliminate suffering, 114; "Down with," should be the cry of the Socialist, 120; modern lack of responsibility concerning, 215.
Profiteering, an act of violence, 122.
Progress, stupidity a form of, 14; the last 19th century ideal to perish, 158; belief, in, natural to those who believe in a beneficent deity, 159.
Psycho-analysis, revelations of, in cases where procreative instinct has been checked, 109 *n*.

- Reading, should involve discernment, 139; real, not taught in State schools, 139; teaching of English necessary for, 145.
- Religion, comforts people for the sufferings of others, 50.
- Renaissance, a period of social unrest, 155.
- Revolution, due to confusion of language, 14, 15, 17, 19.
- Rich, the, their truth-proof environment, 130; show their misery in neurasthenia, hedonism, etc., 165; as unhappy as the poor, 166—169.
- Right, quite meaningless to-day, 24.
- Romanticism, destroys happiness and order, 183; romantic not to suspect physiological causes for unrest, 188.
- Rousseau, his misunderstanding of words led to French Revolution, 17; falsifies evidence, 23; a sentimentalist, 52; his meaningless phrase about freedom, 77, 82.
- Rulers, their duty to assuage violence, 122.
- Russia, revolution in, fomented by starvation, 185.
- Schools, elementary, curriculum in, 141—144; suggested reform of curriculum, 145—151; probable good results of this, 151, 152.
- Socialism, a conspiracy against Life, 35; must if honest insist on compulsory labour, 93; offers only material ideals, 162.
- Socialist, the, an invalid, 31; a determined opponent of Life, 36; compassionate for the sufferings of mankind, 97; his desire to eliminate violence, 98; does not reckon with the basic natural element of procreation, 110; cannot accept the means by which alone violence can be eliminated from society, 115; wars against Life itself, 119; exploits stigma attaching to modern success, 124.
- Social Reform, the only question on which modernity is unanimous, 164; but directed only towards the poor, 164; aims only at elevation of standard of living of the poor, 165; directed towards one class only, 172; cannot cure despondency, 177; falsely thought to be "practical," 178 *n*.
- Social unrest, due to despondency, 155, 156; caused by ill-health, 187, 188, 194, 197.
- Starvation, foments revolt, 185.
- Strength, has no choice, 82; or freedom, 83—85; except in certain cases, 85.
- Stupidity, increasing, 14.
- Suffering, necessary so long as society is based on violence, 113, 114; can only be eliminated by restricting procreation, 114; in modern society not borne by the unworthiest, 124.
- Success, is not to-day connected with superiority, 43 *n*; stigma attaching to modern, 124.
- Sweating, an act of violence, 122.
- Tea, in every way deleterious, 191.
- Temperance movement, a helpless and Puritanical solution of the liquor question, 195.
- Tyranny, of ideas, the most powerful, 179, 180, 183.
- Ugliness, increasing, of modern Europe kills love, 177.
- Values, transvaluation of, still possible, 42, 43; the vulgar, of modern society, 124, 125; survival, alone too ardently followed to-day, 204, 205.

222 FALSE ASSUMPTIONS OF "DEMOCRACY"

Vanity, responsible for revolution, 73.

Victorian Poets, their misunderstanding of Nature, 171.

Violence, the, of modern wealth, 42; the desire of Socialists to do away with, 98, 100; supreme in Nature and essential to life, 99; cannot be eliminated even from Socialist State, 102, 104; inherent in procreation, 102—108, 125; the, of emigration, 107; necessarily entails suffering, 113; necessary for the charm of life, 116; man-made deeds of, 122, 123.

Voluntary actions, generally associated with weak and useless people, 82.

Vote, the, does not secure freedom, 91.

Wealth, to-day tends to get into the hands of the unworthy, 38; and those who use it unscrupulously, 39; was not always respected *per se*, 40, 41; to-day a curse owing to false values, 42; connected generally with vulgarity since the 17th century, 209.

Women, the supposed injustice of their lot, 46; less social than men, 48; the ignorance of English, about cooking, 191.

Words, may be used as missiles, 13; may inspire uniform action, 20.

Working-classes, their inarticulateness, 132, 133, their women's ignorance of cooking, 191.

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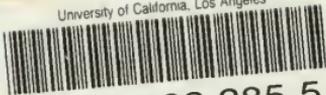
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