A YEAR OF PROPHESYING

H. G. Wells



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PUBLISHED: 1925
SOURCE: PROJECT GUTENBERG
EDITION: THE MACMILLAN COMPANY, NEW YORK, 1925



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Foreword

This book consists of a year of journalistic writing, fifty-five articles altogether, and all that ought to be said in the preface will be found in the concluding article.

H. G. W.

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I

The league of nations and the federation of mankind

>22.9.23

I am one of those people who believe that if human affairs are to go on without decay and catastrophe, there must be an end to the organisation of war. I believe that the power to prepare for war and make war must be withdrawn from separate States, as already it has been withdrawn from separate cities and from districts and from private individuals, and that ultimately there must be a Confederation of all mankind to keep one peace throughout the world.

The United States of America is but the first instance of a federating process which will, I believe, extend at last to the whole world. Since 1917 I have given much more of my waking life to that vision of a confederated mankind than I have given to any other single interest or subject. And yet I am not a supporter of the League of Nations in its present form, and I do not think that the League of Nations at Geneva is ever likely to develop into an effective World Confederation. It is much more likely to develop into a serious obstacle to such a Confederation. The sooner now that it is scrapped and broken up the better, I think, for mankind. I am hostile to the present League of Nations *because* I desire the Confederation of Mankind.

I do not think that the obstructive possibilities of the existing League of Nations are sufficiently understood by liberal-minded people throughout the world. I do not think they realise how effectively it may be used as a consumer and waster of the creative energy that would otherwise carry us forward toward World Confederation.

The League of Nations that we saw in our visions in those distressful and yet creative years, 1917-18, was to have been a real step forward in human affairs. It was to have been a repetition on a gigantic scale of that magnificent turning-point in the history of America when it was decided that the conferring representatives of the liberated colonies should talk no longer of the people of Virginia, the people of Georgia, and the people of Massachusetts, but instead of the people of the United States. So in a wider stride we were to begin to forget the particular interests of the people of Germany and of the people of France and of the people of England in a new realisation of the common needs and dangers and sacrifices of the people of the world. So we hoped. So we still try to hope.

But that was far too wide a stride for humanity to take all at once. The League we desired was to have been the first loose conference that would have ended in a federal government for the whole earth. It was to have controlled war establishments from the start, constricted or abolished all private armament firms, created and maintained a world standard of currency, of labour legislation, of health and education, watched the world production of staple articles for the common good, restricted malignant tariff hostilities, negotiated and regulated the migrations of populations, and made the ways of the world, the high seas, and the international land routes alike open and safe for all decent men. So we saw it as a new, brave assertion of human sanity and of the right of all men to a certain fullness of life, against old hates, old prejudices, old debts and claims and limitations.

And there seemed to some of us to be sufficient will in the world then for so bold and great a beginning. I wonder—empty speculation though it is now—if we were indeed so wrong in thinking that—if some man or group of men of supreme genius might not have achieved a real world peace even in 1919. All over the world there

were millions of people, prepared by immense sufferings and fears for so drastic a change. There were great masses of people everywhere mentally ready for that League. For many months President Wilson, simply because he had said “League of Nations” plainly and clearly, was the greatest man on earth. He overshadowed Kings and Emperors.

Most of us can still recall that false dawn, that phase of hope. When the first great gathering to inaugurate the English League of Nations Union met in Westminster, people were turned away from the dangerously packed hall, not by the hundred but by the thousand. But it is easier to assemble crowds of enthusiastic people than to give them faithful leaders and capable Ministers. The First Crusade might have taught us that. The new movement had no leaders worth considering, and into the vacuum poured all the eager stuff of the old order. I remember how my heart sank that day when I saw the brightest bishops and the best-advertised Nonconformist leaders, politicians needing a new line of goods, the rising Bar and the social collectors, Mrs. Asquith and her set, all the much-photographed and the much-talked-about, swarming up upon the Westminster platform, pushing well into the limelight, nodding and gesticulating to each other, as gay as if they were at a fashionable wedding, before dear Lord Grey, that dignified image of British statesmanship, read out the platitudes he had prepared for the occasion. The common folk of the earth might want a new organisation of peace in the world, but these people of all people I realised would never give it them.

Things come not so swiftly to suffering mankind. The order has indeed gone forth, men know their need, but the master artisan that will fulfil it has still to learn his business and make his tools. Perhaps he has still to be born. And, meanwhile, in the light of this false dawn, a League of Nations, that hardly pretended even to look like what we desired, was planned in Paris hurriedly and cheaply, and run up at Geneva. It has provided a job for Sir Eric Drummond, a British Foreign Office official unknown to the generality of mankind, and Lord Robert Cecil, hitherto prominent chiefly as the inveterate enemy of unsectarian education in England, secured political resuscitation as its leading advocate. With the permission of France

and Great Britain this League has negotiated one or two minor settlements that were not too deeply entangled in the policy of these Great Powers, and it has afforded a number of Spanish-American politicians agreeable, if expensive, holidays in Europe. And whenever one wants to talk of the Confederation of Mankind now, it gets in the way.

We had thought that the League of Nations would abolish diplomacy. We found it had merely added another piece, and a very ineffective piece at that, to the already crowded diplomatic game upon the European board.

That great Confederation of Mankind that we desire, that great peace with variety round and about the earth, cannot arise out of such a beginning. This League of Nations at Geneva is not even the germ of such a thing. Rather it is the instinctive effort of the old European order to stifle this creative idea on its birth by encysting it in a tradition of futility and diplomatic methods. The way to human confederation is by a longer route, and the end is not to be attained by any such hasty constitution as that of the League. The Confederation of Man is a task for generations. Tens of thousands of leaderly men and women must serve that idea and live and die for it before it can approach realisation. Millions must respond to the service of their leadership. The idea must become the fundamental political idea of hundreds of millions, ousting kings and flags from men's imaginations. Then we can begin to get together an effective ruling body. A stupendous task, you say, but not an impossible one. A day will come, I believe, when this great dream will be realised, when all the paraphernalia of war or of national sovereignty—it is the same thing—will have followed the stone gods and human sacrifices to limbo, and when a new phase of human experience will begin.

So far there has been no real civilisation of the world; civilisation is still only an occasional incident, a passing gleam of promise in the lives of a handful of people here and there. But civilisation will come at last for all. It is about that coming of a world confederation and of the world civilisation it will make possible, that I shall be writing chiefly in this series of weekly articles. Now and then I shall diverge to other topics, but that will be my main theme, the realisation of civilisation. I shall consider scientific progress, educational and social

work, political happenings, and the general trend of current events, and almost always I shall consider them in direct relation to that new age that lies before mankind. I shall write about the signs of the times and about typical men and women just as they seem to be making or marring these creative hopes. I do not expect my readers to agree with me always. I shall write about contentious things, and my last thought will be of pleasing or propitiating. At times I shall certainly irritate. But I hope to interest. And some few of my younger readers, at least, I hope to infect with that same idea of creative service for the new civilisation which possesses my own life.

II

The beauty of flying

29.9.23

This last summer I had a number of aeroplane journeys about Europe. I had flights in several of the big omnibus aeroplanes that fly on the more or less regular European services, and also I flew as the single passenger in smaller open machines. There is a delight and wonder in the latter sort of flying altogether lost in the boxed-in aeroplane.

International jealousies, commercial rivalries, and the meanness of outlook universally prevalent in Europe at the present time are muddling away most of the possible freedom and happiness of air travel. I flew from London to Amsterdam, but I had to get my money back for the rest of the journey to Berlin, and take a night train, because of some hitch in the German arrangements, and similarly the Franco-Rumanian service from Vienna via Prague and Strassburg to Paris, so triumphantly inaugurated a little while ago, was in a state of dislocation, and I had to make that journey round by way of Holland to avoid the inconveniences and delays due to the fooleries of French “policy” upon the Rhine. But I flew, when there was a machine to fly in and no patriotic idiocy to prevent it, and I have renewed and strengthened my sense of the sweetness and beauty of air travel—in the small open machine.

As I hung in the crystalline air above the mountains of Slovakia, far above the wooded hills and deep green gorges, with the culminating masses of the Little Carpathians heaped up to the right of me and the line of the White Carpathians away to the left, and ahead of me, still dim and distant, the striped fields and villages of the plain of Bratislava; and as I turned about and looked at the blue Moravian lands behind me, with every stream and pool picked out in molten silver by the afternoon sun, I was as near the summit of felicity as I have been in all my very pleasant life. Ever and again we overtook some little puff of cloud. There were little troops of bright white cloudlets that raced with us eastward, swift and noiseless; their shadows raced our own little shadow up the slopes and across the forest crests below, and their whiteness and their transitory cool embrace as we passed through them, enhanced by contrast the sunlit clearness and brightness of the outspread world.

For the first part of my flight that day I was accompanied by three other Czech machines. They were fighting aeroplanes. They came up abreast of me in the liquid air, and their aviators signalled to me, and then, suddenly, they dived and swept over in a loop and fell down like dead leaves for a thousand feet or so and righted themselves and flew home again to Prague. I have seen such manœuvres before from the ground, but they are far more graceful and lovely when one floats above them and watches the aeroplane drop down like a falling kite, almost, it seems, to the spires and tree-tops.

At last we began to descend, and circled down to Nitra, a place I had never heard of before, a wonderfully beautiful and, I should think, a very prosperous town, with a great church and many spires, and from the aerodrome at Nitra I started again two days later to return to Prague. The weather was unsettled, and the most hopeful time for flying was the early morning. I left Topolcany, where I had been staying, at dawn, therefore, with a full moon shining brightly in a rain-washed sky, and after a little misadventure and a cut head in a ditch, for automobiles are much less safe than aeroplanes, and the roads that morning were wet mire, reached Nitra at sunrise and rose with the red blaze of the sun above the hills.

Sun and aeroplane seemed to soar up together. Never before had I been up in the air so early in the morning. All the little trees below were blobs and dots, but they cast shadows hundreds of feet long, and in the deep blue nooks and crannies of the gold-lit hills the white mists huddled.

The wind rose against us as we returned and blew a gale. We took four hours to make a journey that the other way, before the wind, had taken little more than two. Between Brunn and Prague the aeroplane swayed and danced like a kite on its string, and ever and again found an air pocket and dropped a few score feet. But though I am but a moderate sailor, I do not get air-sick; and to sit loose and lax and unafraid, strapped into an open aeroplane, drenched in sweet air, is altogether different from being enclosed in an air omnibus. I had rather be four hours in an open aeroplane in a high wind than two in an automobile on a bad road or one in a Channel steamboat on a rough day.

Those two flights in Slovakia are among the very happiest experiences I have ever had in my life. And it irks me to think that, because of the incoherent muddle of human affairs, things go so slowly that I shall probably never be able to go round the world in the same delightful fashion, and fly over the deserts of Arabia and the plains of India, and down the gorges of the Yang-tse-Kiang. All these things I might do in a saner world. The places exist, the discoveries have been made, but a magic net of rivalries, obstructions, and vile preoccupations, delays the consummation of these bright possibilities. A happier generation will have all these pleasures within its reach. Such an aeroplane as the one I flew in need not cost more than a Ford car, even now, and it is almost as easy to fly as it is to drive an automobile.

But, of course, all such things must wait, and civilisation must wait, until M. Poincaré has collected the claims of France upon Germany or smashed up Europe. It is so much more important, you understand, to collect these legendary, impossible debts, that one little scrap of Europe has figured up against another little scrap of Europe, than to get on with living. The Germans must not be allowed to develop their air services; that would never do for the politicians; and, indeed, every European country must do all it can to restrain

the air development of every other country. We must all get in each other's way; that is the "common sense" of national "policy." Why else are we all boxed up in little separate sovereign States? And so you and I, Dear Reader, will never get more than such brief samples and intimations of the happiness we might have in the air, and most people now alive in the world will never get to flying at all. They will die and never know. They will grub along the earth's surface and die with this great delight almost within their reach, taunting them by its humming passage across their sky.

III

The triumph of France

6.10.23

The long-spun-out passive resistance in the Ruhr is over, and the controlled, instructed, and disciplined French Press, and the more than French Press which serves the national interests of France in Great Britain and Holland and other European countries, is cock-a-hoop with the clamour of this empty victory. Let us consider what it means for civilisation and the world at large.

Men's memories are short, and it may be well to remind them of the broad facts that have led up to this outrageous, pitiful struggle of the Ruhr. In November 1918 the German people, after an unexampled struggle of four years, surrendered to the Allied Powers arrayed against them. They surrendered on the promises held out to them by the Fourteen Points of President Wilson and by the British propaganda of Crewe House. They surrendered, and they were disarmed and placed in a position in which it was impossible for them to resume resistance. The Americans and British, at any rate, were bound in honour to see that the virtual pact of the surrender was observed, and they did not do so. A peace was put over the German peoples having no relation to the clear understanding of the

virtual pact of the surrender, and the bill for damages and reparations was figured up against them utterly beyond their capacity to pay. The Germans signed the Peace Treaty only after the most strenuous protests and because they were then powerless to do anything else. The Treaty was not a bargain to which they agreed, it was a monstrous and impossible obligation rammed down their throats.

There can be only two judgments about this over-charge. Either it was made out of sheer ignorance and levity, or it was made with the deliberate intention of keeping Germany henceforth in arrears and in the wrong, so that at any sign of economic or political revival she could be at once claimed against and stricken down again. Possibly ignorance and levity mingled with foreseeing malignity in the counsels at Versailles. But the temptations created by the situation have proved irresistible. Throughout the years immediately following this Treaty France has never faltered from her conception that the new peace was only the continuation and completion of her ages-long feud against Germany. She has been quietly and steadfastly strangling Germany in the name of her debt. At Washington she refused to discuss the question of land disarmament—some of us can still recall M. Briand's preposterous speech about the concealed arms and hidden armies of Germany—and across the amiable, foolish face of the Geneva League of Nations she has woven a net of armed alliances, heaping guns and dull and overwhelming expense upon the insolvent peasant States of Eastern Europe, and dissipating the money she owes to Britain and America upon fresh military adventures. She is now indisputably in military control of Europe. Great Britain has displayed no such fixity of intention as France, and, particularly since the downfall of Mr. Lloyd George, has just rolled about in an uneasy, protesting manner. America has withdrawn in a state of virtuous indignation from the mess she helped so carelessly and generously to make.

Until the spring of this year Germany continued to make very considerable but insufficient payments to her conquerors. There seemed, indeed, a possibility that she might presently muddle back to a tolerable and honourable position in European affairs. France perceived that the hour had come for effective action; and Mr. Lloyd

George being by that time out of her way, she occupied the Ruhr, the industrial heart of Germany. She occupied it without the consent of her Allies, and so illegally; and with an utter disregard of the interests of Britain, who came to her rescue when she was faint with terror in 1914. She occupied it with every circumstance of petty insolence. Most of us have seen photographs and kinema films of the French troops strutting through the disarmed, defenceless German towns, and the French officers hitting off the hats and smacking the faces of any bystanders who did not display sufficient reverence for their intrusive flag.

I cannot imagine what black murder would not spring up in the hearts of an American or British population treated as the Germans were treated this spring. The behaviour of the Germans has indeed been amazingly patient. The rest of Germany has wrecked itself financially in a desperate attempt to sustain the Ruhr workers in an attitude of passive resistance, and now at last these overwhelming payments have to cease. For the better part of a year the trade and industry of Central Europe has been dislocated. A year of human life and human production has been frittered away in this struggle. The great economic machine of Western Germany is now like some complex piece of apparatus that has been fought for by infuriated children. How deep the physical and moral wounds inflicted on the war-exhausted, depleted being of Germany may be we can as yet only speculate.

But France has achieved a great victory in this new war, for war it is, against an unarmed antagonist. She is victorious, and the tricolour triumphs over Europe. The passive resistance of the Ruhr has been abandoned and the German Government has been unable to get any conditions from France in exchange for this surrender. The debt looms as large as ever, the possibility of effective payments is much remoter than it has been before, and France is in a stronger position argumentatively than she has even been. She can still go on counting her steadily accumulating claim. She can proceed, whenever she wishes to do so, to fresh seizures, further occupations, and further humiliations for her defeated enemy. There is no boundary set, by anything that has happened, to the systematic disintegration of the great civilisation of Germany. Germans may be

found vile enough and foolish enough to assist in the political fragmentation of their own people. Presently we may see Germany broken up into half a dozen nasty little retrogressive States, all played off against each other to their mutual enfeeblement by France.

Then, except for an ambiguous Italy, there will be nothing left upon the Continent of Europe but a victorious France and her smashed and broken antagonists and her servile and uncertain allied peasant States, Europe Balkanised from the Rhine to the Black Sea. It will be a realisation of the great dreams of Napoleon I, a hundred and twenty years later. True, Russia will loom rather dark and rather neglected in the background of the French millennium, but the French think that from a military or political point of view Russia is to be counted out for the next fifty years. And, as the happy achievement of “security” in Europe becomes more certain, France will be able to turn her attention to her old rival and temporary ally across the Channel. French ideas of trade and economics have always been nationalist and monopolistic, and at last she will be in a position to apply to Britain with real effect that system of exclusion from the markets of Europe, the Continental system, which failed when Napoleon I first devised and tried it a century or more ago. Moreover, she will be at last able to reopen the discussion of the proper ownership of the vast natural resources of Central Africa, at present largely shared by the British. The victory of the Ruhr is a considerable victory, a great hungry victory, but it is only one in a sustained campaign in the realisation of a policy centuries old, the policy of French predominance in the European world. France has had revolutions and reverses, but her nationalism is the intensest of all nationalism, and her conception of international policy has been the same under Bourbon, Bonaparte, or Republic. She seems to be incapable of any such ideas as co-operation, coalescence, union, pooling, reconciliation, reconstruction on a broader basis, brotherhood of nations or the like. There is no stopping her. She will thrust her fluttering tricolour, her brave little men in horizon blue and steel helmets, her intrigues and her claims, farther and farther over a suffering, disorganised world—until she becomes by common consent impossible.

The Ruhr is a great victory for France, and it has won her nothing. What next will she do after the Ruhr?

IV

The Singapore Arsenal

13.10.23

It is proposed that Great Britain, which is too shabbily poor to give the mass of its own children more than half an elementary education, which cannot house its workers with comfort or decency, which has over a million unemployed, shall spend great sums of money upon a naval establishment at Singapore. This undertaking is just not within the positive prohibitions of the Washington Agreement. It is a few hundred miles west of the area involved in that Agreement. But it is flatly contrary to the spirit of the Washington gathering. It is a frank provocation to crippled and devastated Japan; it dominates the route of the French to Tonkin; it is a contemptuous gesture at any American notions about the “freedom of the seas.”

Provided cruisers and battleships are to play a part in the “next war,” it is an admirably chosen position. Let the reader look it up in any atlas and see how its submarines will be able to radiate over the adjacent seas and how all India supports it. It is fairly well placed for air war also. On the supposition that the world is still to go on divided among aggressive sovereign States, with phases of war preparation called peace and acute phases of more and more destructive war, it

is quite a good move in the game. On the supposition that the world is growing up to any age of reason and that a world civilisation is attainable, it is a monstrously stupid crime.

When I was at the Washington Conference upon the Limitation of Armaments I denounced the French with what many people thought was an extreme bitterness for their reliance upon submarines and Senegalese troops. This British feat at Singapore deserves an equal denunciation. These preparations of the French and British are equally acts of war against the general peace of mankind. It is no good treating the French as though they alone were outraging the unity of mankind with their great armies and equipments. Great Britain, we now see by this crime at Singapore, is just as mischievously and criminally disposed. Both Powers are disturbers of the peace and destroyers of human hope.

But when the thing is done by one's own country and by people we know, one sees more of it and more of the humanity of it than when it happens abroad; and I find a particular figure floating before my mind now whenever I hear or read the word Singapore. He will serve as my type specimen for this aggressive and troublesome British imperialism, and very probably the essential wickedness of French policy finds its embodiment in some quite similar personalities.

In which case we are not up against wickedness, but against—what shall I say?—a retardation of mental development.

My type specimen is the First Lord of the Admiralty in the present[1] British Government, Mr. Amery. He is a pleasantly smiling, short, thick-set lad of fifteen. He was born in 1873, but in 1889, when he should have become sixteen, he was living the life of an exceptionally clever boy at Harrow, and somehow just became fifteen again, and he has remained fifteen ever since. Every year his birthday comes round without the slightest effect upon him. He may be a little more substantial, but his bland, clean-shaven face is the same that confronted the Harrow masters. He has just the same smile. He went on to a brilliant career at Balliol College, Oxford, always famous for its retardation of adolescence, and emerged a devotee of the British Empire and of the games of Foreign Policy and War. Kipling was new to men then, and that generation was drunken

with him. Cecil Rhodes was a great inspiration in the land. He could not have preached salvation by Anglo-Saxons more earnestly if he had been Mr. Lothrop Stoddard. Mr. Amery, under these influences and by a natural inclination, dedicated his life to the British Empire, any British Empire apparently and whatever it did, and he has been so busy serving it ever since that he has never had time to think what it is at all.

[1] October 1923.

He is one of a group of interesting youths of fifteen who focussed upon Balliol College. But most of the others have become portly or bald, or they have grown whiskers or such-like disguises; none of them still show their fifteen-ness as engagingly as Mr. Amery.

Now the mind of a boy of fifteen is a very interesting sort of mind. Imagination is awake and lively, but it is still a narrow imagination. Many of the emotions and social devotions are still undeveloped. A boy of fifteen is still capable of making a volcano in the garden with all the available explosives; he likes mixing chemicals to see what will happen; he thinks the loveliest possession in the world is a gun. If you give him a toy railway system he will take great pains to arrange for a really smashing collision. Towards women he is a Spartan—a Red Indian. Something of fifteen still lingers in my own composition, though most of me is a little older, and before the war I used to play a great war-game on my barn floor with lead soldiers, realistic scenery and guns that hit, with other boys, actually and sometimes even chronologically fifteen. Unflinching fellows those lead soldiers were; they left no widows and orphans, and if one got disabled there was no pension. You melted him down.

Now both Mr. Amery and I would like to play soldiers with the world. But while Mr. Amery has remained fifteen through and through, large parts of me have gone on growing older. This older section of me can see men as something more than lead soldiers, and realise war in terms of spilled human life and utter waste and as a stupid massacre of boys and young men. Even that war-game we used to play in our barn left the floor in a weary-looking muddle, and was a bore to put away. But the highest expression of Mr. Amery's being is, I perceive, to play soldiers and battleships with mankind.

And the amazing thing is that we let him!

We are disposed to let this man with the soul of a fifteen-year-old kid spend money for which our schools are being starved, upon this solemn childishness at Singapore. And there may be thousands of us doomed to wounds and blood and tears under the plump hands and knees of Mr. Amery and his little friends and their antagonists as they crawl about their game on the floor of the world.

But if I can see Mr. Amery, not as a black devotee of blood-lust but as an innocent perennial juvenile, then I am bound if I can to see the same thing in France. Those people over there who are opening new boxes of African soldiers and setting them down in Germany, and who are so secret and busy with their submarines, are probably just such innocents as Mr. Amery—just as solemnly fifteen. They have not yet learnt to see the world in terms of life. And, if so, the cure for war is not so much for the world to grow better as for the world to grow up.

Mr. Amery is not a bit terrible personally, but it is terrible that he should have any sort of control of the serious things of life. I think he ought to be kept out of mischief—just as I think another lad of the same age, Mr. Winston Churchill, ought to be kept out of mischief, in some sort of institution where he can play Kriegspiel for the rest of his existence without endangering human life. And I ask reasonable adult men in France whether the time is not ripe for a similar segregation of puerility from their Foreign Office and War Office out of the reach of mischief. Perhaps the 1924 electors will do something in that direction. If these lads presently get a game of war going between France and England we shall have the whole fabric of civilisation so entirely in ruins before it is over that I doubt if it will be reconstructed for many centuries.

V

The league of nations again

20.10.23

I opened this series of articles with an attack on the existing League of Nations at Geneva. This attack provoked a very considerable correspondence in reply. Hardly anyone was disposed to defend the League as perfect or satisfactory, but it was urged that it was a beginning, a germ, a young thing that might accumulate power and prestige, that its intentions were admirable, that it embodied and sustained an ideal, and that if it were destroyed there would be nothing to stand between the nations at all. I was reproached because—after an advocacy of world unity for a quarter of a century—I refused to recognise this poor diplomatic changeling as the birth of my desires.

It is perhaps desirable that I should answer these criticisms and state a little more explicitly why I think this affair at Geneva is worse than no league of mankind at all. I do not think it can ever develop into a serviceable organ for world civilisation, because I think that it was planned from the outset upon the wrong lines; and that it is as reasonable to support it in the hope of its growing to meet the world's

needs as it would be to buy a broken-down perambulator in the hope that it would presently develop into a much needed automobile.

The Geneva League of Nations is a start, I admit, but it is a start in the wrong direction; and before we can get upon the way to any real collective organisation of world affairs we have to retrace our steps to the starting-point before there was any League. The League is malformed in such a way that it can never hope to grow straight and strong.

One primary fault in the structure of this existing League is its complete abandonment to the idea of national sovereignty in its intensest and most mischievous form. Any little bundle of human beings, however small, illiterate, and unimportant, provided only that it was a law unto itself and waved a flag about and insisted upon a cantankerous independence, was regarded as a possible unit by the pedants who devised the League. Any body of people, however numerous, intelligent, and significant in human affairs, provided it had grouped itself into any other larger political aggregation, ceased, on the other hand, to be anything but a merged participator in the League's affairs. So Abyssinia, in which there are probably not two hundred people capable of understanding the rudiments of world politics, could be considered seriously as a member of this absurd association, while Scotland, the best educated country in Europe, was not to appear except as a button or collar-stud, so to speak, upon the figure of the British representative.

The manifest consequences of such a preposterous recognition of separatism, the inevitable feebleness and disingenuousness of a League based upon such ideas, were pointed out as early as May 1918 in a memorandum issued by the official propaganda organisation of the British Government at Crewe House. Crewe House was rather a thorn in the side of the dear old British Foreign Office; in 1918 it was asking for a definition of Allied war aims and all sorts of inconvenient, honest questions. The memorandum was treated according to the best diplomatic precedents. Although we were making it the basis of extravagant promises to Germany, it was never communicated, as it should have been, to the French and Italians. At the end of the war the promises of Crewe House dropped out of the victorious picture. The reasoning and the warnings of this

memorandum were entirely ignored by the hasty gentlemen at Versailles who threw together the Geneva League of Nations.

These gentlemen seem to have been profoundly influenced by an infantile analogy between a sovereign State and an individual man. This is the age of democracy; and the League, most marvellous formula! was “to make the world safe for democracy.” Modern democracy is taken to mean so much political equality between adult and adult as may be achieved by giving each individual a vote. What more easy or—if you think it out—more fallacious than to transfer this idea to sovereign States and give each of them a vote in a wonderful congress of mankind? But one sovereign State is not like another sovereign State, as one individual man is like another; the difference between this sovereign State and that is far profounder even than the difference between animals of different classes. The difference in structure, complexity, function, and destiny, for example, between the organisation known as the United States of America and that known as Nicaragua is a difference as wide as that between the whole plant of a great industrial district and a small domestic mangle. But in the original Covenant of the League both were treated as individuals differing only a little in size and importance. Liberia, Belgium, France, Hayti, and the Hedjaz were all to be—and they are!—citizens in this marvellous republic of States. It is like treating a jar of pickles, an opera house, a battleship, a bundle of sugar-cane, and a small travelling bag as equivalent things. Any old thing with a flag on it—that is the rule.

Can you expect the debates and divisions of a body so constituted to have any restraining influence upon the policies and practices of the Great Powers? It is treated with open contempt in France and Italy, and if there is a sort of support for it in Great Britain it is largely because there is a feeling that with Lord Balfour and Lord Robert Cecil to the fore and with its British Foreign Office Secretary and so forth its procedure can be manipulated in the interests of the—I won’t say British, for that is too good a word to use—the “Anglican” Empire.

Now my case is that this constitution of the League is for the reasons I have stated bad beyond all patching. There is, I hold, no need at all to base the thing we need upon a sham Parliament of a

miscellany of sovereign States, big or little, civilised or savage. What civilisation needs are open, efficient, and authoritative controls of certain universal interests, controls representing the great mass of civilised people and their common world interests. For all practical ends it would be infinitely better to let Liberia, Hayti, the Hedjaz, and the like go hang. Such little, such parochial States ought to learn to combine up with kindred organisations—or hold their peace in world affairs. Not one of them contains as many people educated up to ideas of world policy as, let us say, any outlying suburb of Amsterdam. If half a dozen of the bigger political systems of the world, or even two or three, could get together to sustain a common monetary standard, a common transport control, a common law court, a tariff union, a mutual defence system, and a common guarantee of disarmament, they would achieve something beyond the uttermost possibilities of this Geneva affair.

So much political coalescence on the part—to take an example boldly—of the United States, the British system, Holland, and the Scandinavian countries would form a nucleus so large and influential that upon it the rest of the world, however fiercely nationalist at heart, would in the end be obliged to crystallise. I believe all these countries I have named, and Latin America and Spain and Portugal to boot, could pool their foreign policies—for that is what any genuine League of Nations means—without encountering insuperable difficulties. The worst barrier would be tariffs, but I do not believe that would be an invincible barrier. Such a club of civilised peoples would very speedily have all the rest of the world on its waiting list. And I do not see why its achievement should be any more difficult than, or indeed nearly as difficult as, bolstering up this ineffective pretence, the present League of Nations. I contend that instead of there being no alternative to the League of Nations the way would open quite naturally to such alternatives, directly it was cleared out of the way. It would, for instance—if only on account of the United States—be much easier to set up a great International Court of Justice with proper sanctions without the League than with it.

It is not as though the present League had accumulated any honour or prestige during its four years of life in Geneva. In the case

of the Polish attack on Russia, in the case of the Greek aggressions on Turkey, in regard to the occupation of the Ruhr, the murderous bombardment of Corfu, and the stealing of the Greek deposit by the Council of Ambassadors to bring the Italians to evacuate Corfu, it has shown itself trivial, useless, and ridiculous. It is either silent before such outrages or it speaks with a quavering voice and nobody listens. It is a blind alley for good intentions, it is a weedy dump for all the weaknesses of European liberalism. Its past is contemptible, and the briefer the future of its present constitution the better for mankind.

VI

The aviation of the half-civilised

27.10.23

It is probable that the first adequate and successful inauguration of air transport will be in North and South America, but it is in Europe that the needs and possibilities are greatest; and were it not for the short-sightedness and petty competitiveness of the Europeans it is in Europe that flying might first become the usual method of travel for distances of over three hundred miles. Europe is so cut up by channels, sands, bays, Zuyder Zees, Adriatics and Baltic Seas and the like, she has so clumsy and ill-planned a railway network, planned upon national lines to restrict too ready movements across frontiers, that she calls aloud for the aeroplane to soar over these wet obstacles and tangled confusions. But the chief intent and occupation of European administrators nowadays lies in spoiling the efforts of and making life insupportable for other Europeans, and naturally flying presents itself to them chiefly as a provocation to international sabotage. Most of the air services we hear about in Europe are hopelessly inadequate to the needs of civilised people who want to travel conveniently and beautifully. They are

uncomfortable, unpunctual, dangerous, ridiculous, and—in view of what might be—pitiful.

It is as absurd to think of an air tour of Western Europe as it would be to think of an automobile tour of the Balkans and Asia Minor. The countries concerned are not sufficiently civilised to allow of such methods of transport.

Occasionally one sees maps in the newspapers showing the most wonderful network of air routes all over Europe: London to Moscow, Manchester to Constantinople, and the like. Any travel bureau will hand the credulous inquirer neat little handbills of air services, showing how he may breakfast in London and dine in Berlin, and so forth. Let the credulous inquirer try these services. He will find a few tired and badly overhauled machines run by companies with entirely insufficient supplies, plying in a mood of hectic uncertainty over some of these routes. On others the only thing he will find soaring will be soaring promises. And he will find very little hope in the future of any better services.

I tried an air tour of Europe this summer. I did not warn any of the new companies concerned that I meant to write about them. I went as an ordinary passenger. Let me tell my experiences very briefly.

I started with a ticket for Berlin from London, and my first flight was to Amsterdam. I started on a perfect day for flying. But as we approached the Channel it became evident that we were not going to cross the water, but that we were swerving round to Lympne. Something had gone wrong. We landed at Lympne. The aviator apologised; he had an oil leakage. Matters were patched up, and we got up again and flew to Amsterdam. There the oil leakage was worse than ever, and we could not have gone much farther. A head-wind or a sudden storm might have got us into serious trouble. We had been flying in a machine that had not been sedulously overhauled, an overworked machine.

Next day I should have flown on to Berlin. When I went to the Amsterdam office to start, I learned that no aeroplane had come from Berlin for two days—though it was admirable flying weather—and the office could not tell me when a machine would be available. Apparently there had been some financial dislocation of the German service. I had to get round to various European towns I wanted to

visit by means of the shabby, disheartened railway services of Central Europe. Returning, I did secure tickets for Paris from Prague by the Franco-Rumanian Air Company, which professes to run a swift and regular service from Bucharest to Paris. At the Prague aerodrome there is a vainglorious monument, an obelisk, to commemorate the foundation of this company. That and the office in Prague, where I got my money back, was as much as I saw of the Franco-Rumanian Company. Thanks to certain fortunate chances, which made me independent of private enterprise aeroplane companies, I had had some beautiful flying in Czecho-Slovakia. I made three delightful flights on three separate days, and on two of these days the French machines were not going to Strassburg “on account of the weather.”

The real trouble of that particular company, however, was not the weather, but a shortage of machines. The company has no understanding with the German Government, and its route lies over German territory from Czecho-Slovakia to Strassburg. Badly overhauled machines are never safe to get to their destination, and, I was told, eleven Franco-Rumanian aeroplanes, forced to descend on German territory, had been seized by the Germans.

’Planes were coming to Prague from Warsaw and Vienna and depositing passengers there to get through to their destinations as well as they could, but there was nothing going on to Strassburg. I got to Paris from Prague by train via Amsterdam! That is the present route between these two places, and I suppose it will remain so until our great-grandchildren, if any, see what is left of the French removed from what is left of the Ruhr Valley.

From Paris I started by an English service for London. We started with an air of tremendous punctuality and efficiency from the Hôtel Crillon at three in the afternoon. I reckoned we should be up by 3.30, and that I should dine in London at half-past seven or eight. But we muddled about at the aerodrome of Le Bourget until nearly five, booking luggage, fooling with passports, packing the all too big and clumsy omnibus machine. I sat in a seat with a lot of valises and hat boxes, tied precariously with string, swaying in front of my nose. The saloon had a worn and weary look; it was not nearly so pretty as it is in the advertisement pictures. We made a fairly good flight to the

coast except that now and then the engine popped a little. We rose over the water, as usual, to about five thousand feet. Then as we came within distant sight of Dungeness, one engine began to miss badly. I noticed that we were dropping rapidly. However, we escaped a ducking. We crossed the coast-line while still at nearly two thousand feet and landed at Lympne. Apologies. The defective engine, we were told, was in a hopeless condition, and the company must send us passengers on in cars to a rural railway station and so by slow train to London, to arrive at heaven knows what hour. There was no attempt whatever to bring up a reserve aeroplane from Croydon; I presume because the company has no reserve aeroplanes available. I had the good luck to find a friend at Lympne who took me to his house for the night and turned my misfortune into pleasure, but my fellow-passengers were not so fortunate.

Luckily I was not a passenger in the French Goliath which crashed at West Malling in August last. I have flown successfully on one occasion from Paris to London in a French Goliath, and on another have started from London to Paris and had a forced landing at Lympne. These Goliaths are quite good machines, but they seem to be unlucky ones. That West Malling disaster was only another such story of “private enterprise” flying as I have told, but carried to the pitch of tragedy. The unfortunate machine must have been in a shocking condition of maladjustment. It had already been down at Lympne for patching, and was going on to Croydon. The radiator of the port engine had been leaking. Then as it went on to Croydon the starboard engine failed completely. But we have always been told, perhaps untruthfully, that even if one engine of these double engine machines fails the other suffices to carry on to a safe landing. The port engine was still going. The aviator declared at first that there was a panic among the passengers, and that is why he crashed in a nut plantation. I doubt about the panic. But at any rate, here again was a machine in use in a condition quite unfit for passenger traffic, so that it needed only a momentary nervous failure to destroy it.

The moral I draw here to-day is to repeat exactly what I maintained upon the British Civil Air Transport Commission in 1918. “Private enterprise” cannot run successful European air services. Moreover, it is impossible to control the air services of Europe on

nationalist lines. You cannot have nearly forty sovereign countries each trying to wreck the air service of the other thirty-nine. Europe must be one area for air transport under one control, or there can be nothing but a few ferry services in operation. One comprehensive European air trust, with hundreds and presently thousands of aeroplanes in daily flight and two or three in reserve and under overhaul for every one in the air, would have in the end an enormously profitable organisation. But Europe to-day is as morally incapable of producing such an organisation as Central Africa. These risky trips in dud machines and these flowery prospectuses of defective services are as much organised public flying as this generation is likely to see in Europe.

VII

Will Germany break into pieces?

3.11.23

Will Germany break into pieces and become a group of divergent and mutually hostile States?

To some readers this will seem to be an entirely useless question. They will declare that the thing is happening. Germany is breaking up visibly, they will say. Germany has attempted a democratic republic and failed. The daily news is kaleidoscopic. It varies with the day and the political bias of one's paper. Sometimes Germany is breaking in this way and sometimes in that. But few people seem to have much faith in the final emergence of a united Germany from this sea of disaster and misery in Central Europe.

Perhaps I believe too much in the things of the mind and imagination, in language and writing and literature as a link and a sustaining power in human affairs, but I do not share this belief in the break-up of Germany. I believe she will keep together as Russian-speaking Russia has kept together, and become again a great nation and a great people playing a leading part in the world's destinies.

It is true that her new democratic institutions have worked feebly and disastrously. But just at present what we call democratic

institutions, our old clumsy system of voting and representative government that is, are not working particularly well in any European country. One cannot congratulate either Great Britain or France or Italy upon its triumphant democracy just at the present time. The duly elected British Government is unable to carry out its obvious foreign policy effectively because it is shouted down by a millionaire newspaper-owner suffering from Napoleonic mania, and in France the expression of public opinion is not so much shouted down as battened down under a centralised and all-powerful Press combine. France behaves with the concentrated vigour of monomania, and Great Britain with the self-regardful evasiveness of the feeble-minded, and the common citizen of neither country is really justified in an attitude of superiority towards the distraught and leaderless German.

Distraught and leaderless the Germans are, and—which is perhaps the greatest misfortune that can happen to a people in the face of a steadfast enemy—without a leading idea to hold them together. We have to remember that this great people, the Germans, lost their way in 1848, and have still to recover it. At that time there was a reasonable prospect of a Republican United States of Germany. It was wrecked by the habitual particularism of Germany, and by the self-seeking treason of the Hohenzollerns. Germany was unified later, but from above and not from below, by a crown and dynasty and not by education and an educated popular will, and Germany is still reaping the consequences of that misfortune.

It is not the least among the endless inconveniences of monarchy that it substitutes an unreal symbol for real ideas of unity. Instead of a cult of brotherhood, instead of a pride in the achievements of one's own people in science and art and social progress and the service of mankind, there is substituted, more or less completely, an idiot adulation of the crowned head and his womankind and their offspring. The school children of a monarchist country are trained up to a worship of these glorified individuals; the flag becomes a carpet beneath the feet of their deities, and their attention is diverted from their own pride and honour as future members of a great community. Many people never grow up out of the obsessions of a royalist training, and so it is that the collapse of the Hohenzollern system has

left great masses of the German people imaginatively bankrupt and utterly confused. Any people who had had the same training and the same experience would be equally at a loss and helpless. The idea of a great German republic, one and indivisible, has to be built up now in an atmosphere of unparalleled storm, confusion, and disaster.

It cannot be built up all at once, and meanwhile anything superficial in the way of separations may happen to Germany. I will not attempt to discuss the bubblings of separatism and monarchist extremism that are going on. But one probability is very present in my mind. It is one of the paradoxes of the Russian situation that the Communist Government of Moscow survives there very largely because under the stress of foreign invasions and the foreign-subsidised devastations of White adventurers it became a patriotic Government. In Germany now, neither the big industrials, the old Junkers, nor the ruling classes generally seem to have the wit and generosity to think of their civilisation as a whole. The Communists do—after their fashion. At present the Communists are showing no overwhelming strength in German affairs, but a time may come when great numbers of the German people, trained in hardship, ruined and desperate, may turn to this one party which tells the same story in the Rhineland and Bavaria and Saxony and Prussia.

We have, I think, to count it among the possibilities of the present situation that a Communist Government may presently be fighting for German integrity against foreign domination in Berlin, and that great masses of the German people, like the Russians, may prefer even Communism to the certain shames and indignities of separatism. In which case Monsieur Poincaré will, I suppose, beat up his armies of blacks and whites and march on Berlin. With an “extension” trip to Moscow to follow.

Yet even after that Germany will survive. Twice before in her history Germany has arisen out of desolation and defeat. I believe she will rise again out of her present darkness and end at last the central and leading Power, the very keystone, it may be, of a reconstructed Europe. I believe in the German schoolmaster, the German student, in German persistency, and the patient strength of the German brain. I hated and hate that bastard imitative Byzantine-German Imperialism and German Junkerism, and I believe that our

war to shatter these things was a necessary war. But I have never faltered in my belief in the greatness and soundness of the German people, and in my appreciation of all that we owe in intellectual, social, and industrial stimulus to Germany.

Her present situation is unparalleled. Every attempt she makes to get to her feet is thwarted by her pitiless, senseless foe. Our English-speaking peoples, in our slow, oafish way, are looking on, are assisting, at an attempt to waste and torment to death a great community as civilised as our own. We never came into the war for any such objective, and I do not believe that we shall stand by to the end in the face of this iniquity.

But anyhow, I believe that Germany will come back. Her common language and now her common miseries will keep her one. She has many enemies, but on her side now is the long reach and the long memory of the printed word. Bohemia, Czecho-Slovakia as we call it now, rose again after an almost complete extinction of three hundred years. Dark years are before Germany and a terrible winter, but in two years or ten years Germany will have found her Masaryk and her Benes and be on her way to recovery.

I would not like to be a German separatist in the days to come.

VIII

The future of the British Empire

Empire Review. October 1923

The *Empire Review* has, I perceive, been born again and displays a constellation of gifted contributors writing about subjects of which their knowledge approaches saturation point. Commander Locker Lampson is alive to the need of variety, and for an incidental change he asks me to write upon a topic that he must feel is by no means my specialty. He wants my views about the British Empire. I more than suspect he counts upon my taking a Radical view of that great system. He selects me, an obscure supporter of the Labour Party, as a sample of what men are thinking on that side of the political arena. But I can write only as a man in that street. The official attitude of the party is to be found plainly and simply stated in the publications of the party headquarters.

Yielding to the Editor's persuasiveness, I will set down a few notes and a few generalities that occur to me. They may offend some of those peculiar people who are all out for the British Empire, any old British Empire whatever it is and whatever it does, but I think that they may be of interest to many—what shall I call them?—Imperialists, and I take it most of the readers of the *Empire Review*

are such, who are prepared for the idea that support of the British Empire may be a conditional support and not a fanaticism.

Let me begin with something that is more than a mere verbal quibble. I wish that this political system could have some other name than Empire, because it is not properly an Empire at all. It is a complex association of at least three different types of territory, and the word “Empire” is endlessly misleading and mischievous in connection with it.

In the last few years, for purposes that need not now concern us, I have had to study a certain amount of history and a number of historians. Many men of commanding intelligence have been historians, and I offer no comparison between the intellectual quality of historians and that of scientific men as such. But trained as I was in the clear, subtle and beautiful disciplines of comparative anatomy, I found myself amazed at the easy carelessness of the average historian’s habitual terminology, his slovenly parallelisms and reckless assumptions. A large part of his work is the study of human communities and political associations. Yet I found him without any intelligible classification of political combinations, any real sense of grades and structural differences between one community and another. He slops the word “Empire” over the whole face of history; Athenian Empire and Aztec Empire, Shang Empire and Sung Empire, Empire of Alexander and Roman Empire, Mongol Empire and Hittite Empire, British Empire and Brazilian Empire; it’s all the same to him. “Cats is dogs,” as the porter said, “rabbits is poultry, but a parrot is a passenger.” As a consequence, the historian argues from the most atrocious analogies. And, though there is a considerable and pretentious literature of political science, there does not yet exist in all political and historical literature any attempt at a clear analysis of the differences and affinities of all these various human complexes. Yet to make such an analysis would be a most attractive and fruitful task. Historical and political science has still to find its Linnæus. History, until that happens, remains a slough of terminological confusion, and the ideas of the ordinary educated man drown in that mud.

The word “Empire” came into the world with the expansion of the Roman Republic. The Roman Empire was a thing different in many

fundamentals from the so-called “Empires” that preceded it, the “Shah-doms,” if I may create a sort of temporary word, of Asia and the “Pharaoh-doms” of Egypt, for example. It differed from them at least as widely in its possibilities, structure and range as a species of Tertiary mammals differs from a species of Mesozoic reptiles. It was unprecedented in arising out of an aristocratic republic instead of a conquering monarchy, and in having a legal tradition of a strength and prestige unknown to any previous community. It was unprecedented in its disposition to extend its citizenship beyond its initial boundaries. Its expansion was concurrent with an increasing use of coined money and of credit based upon coined money; its economic and financial system had a quite novel facility and instability. The Empire was held together by a road-system that made the road-system of the Persians seem a mere preliminary experiment. Its extent was far greater than that of any preceding form of political administration. Reading and writing, already raised to new levels of simplicity and convenience by the Greeks and Hebrews, brought what we should think nowadays a small proportion, but which was in those days a quite unprecedented proportion, of the population into an intelligent participation in public affairs. Iron had become widespread for tools and implements as well as weapons, and the horse was now no longer a war-beast but, with its bastard child the mule, a universally available means of transport. All these things made the Roman Imperial System as new a thing in human experience as the United States of America or the present British “Empire,” both of which, I hold, are new species, fresh beginnings without any true affinities in the past.

There is in all history only one rough parallel to the Roman Empire, and that is its contemporary Chinese Empire. But I will restrain my encyclopædic impulse and leave that out of our present discussion.

Now as Gibbon’s great history shows, the history of all Europe and Western Asia since that time is really the story of this unique thing, the Empire, the Roman Empire, and its struggle to exist, to remain one, and to restore itself, when broken, to complete existence. It was broken naturally by the Adriatic crack, running in towards that fatal wedge out of the great plains of the nomads, Hungary; it was broken

by the general incapacity of the Italians for navigation, due perhaps to characteristics of the Italian coast; it was broken by the intellectual inadequacies of a plutocracy. But the Empires that sprang from it, West and East, were only the results of a fission that left the idea of reunion perpetually alive; the Holy Roman Empire, the Tzardom, the Imperialism of Napoleon, even the Austrian Empire and the Hohenzollern Empire, were all logically and legitimately the products of the original Empire, legitimately Empires in origin and intention, attempts to recover a universal sway; parts in a great dreary, futile European drama on which at last in these days the curtain falls.

There has indeed only been one real Empire in the world, this that centred upon Rome and the Mediterranean. Britain played a certain part in this Empire; Henry VIII, for example, was Imperial candidate against Charles V and the King of France; but the rôle of Britain therein has generally been a marginal one. The importance of England to mankind began only when it turned its face from the Empire and from thoughts of the Empire to the ocean. What we call to-day the British Empire is a new thing and a different thing from the Roman Empire, created by new and greater forces, and deserving an entirely distinctive name.

The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries saw the opening phases of a great process of change in human conditions that has been going on until the present time. From the point of view of one who discusses political or economic agglomerations, the most important thing in that great revolution has been the development of new means of communication between man and man. That revolution began with the appearance of the ocean-going sailing ship and of printed paper; it reaches its climax nowadays in wireless telegraphy and the aeroplane. It is now a commonplace, though for many historians and scholars it is quite a recent discovery, that any change in communications involves new economic, strategic and political adjustments. For a score of centuries the horse, the horse-drawn vehicle, the hand-made high-road, the parchment document, the public speaker and vocal teacher and a feeble coastal shipping had been the limiting conditions of all statecraft. Under these conditions the idea of the Empire had been the highest political idea in men’s minds. Now, however, in that age of Renascence, the ocean which

had been an ultimate barrier became almost suddenly a highway; and the printed book, and, presently, the newspaper quickened masses in the community, hitherto politically ineffective, into informed activity. The politics and statecraft of Europe, obsessed—still to this day obsessed—by the doomed Imperial tradition, began nevertheless a clumsy slow adaptation to this process of material change, unable to ignore its pressures and compulsions, but evidently indisposed to recognise its nature.

I use this word “indisposed” deliberately. The political mind, like the legal mind to which it is so closely akin, looks backward habitually, prefers precedents to Utopias, clings to the old and is pushed along by the new. Europe clings still to the Imperial tradition four centuries after it became impracticable; its kindred peoples are divided and they destroy one another in the feuds of a dead issue. Frenchman and German waste Europe, as Asia Minor was wasted by Byzantine and Persian, in a futile search for a kind of supremacy that can never return to this world. They are like rivals who fight for a woman already dead and decayed.

Continental Europe is being desolated and destroyed by imaginative incapacity, by the failure to recognise the obsolescence of its political ideas and traditions. But Europe is not the world, nor will its decline and fall be the end of the human story. In the United States of America, in this so-called British Empire, and now in the United States of Russia, we must recognise a breaking away from tradition as complete as when the Roman Empire broke away from the forms and traditions of any previous political synthesis. These new systems arise not to inherit, but to supersede.

It is this conception of the history of the world during the last four centuries as being essentially, in its broadest aspects, a belated, forced, and largely unconscious process of political adaptation to changing conditions, of vast subconscious and unwilling trials and experiments in new and greater political associations to replace that formerly dominant Imperial idea, that I wish to put before the readers of the *Empire Review*. It carries us on to the further realisation that *since the process of change in communications is only now approaching some sort of limiting completion, the new political systems that have appeared cannot be considered as anything but*

preliminary and transitory systems. The United States of America, the Spanish, Dutch and British colonial empires of the eighteenth century, the Russian Asiatic Empire and the second British Empire of the nineteenth century, the British Empire of the *Empire Review* and of this present discussion, must all from the angle of this conception be seen as things experimental and transient, destined to the most extensive coalescences, readjustments and modifications in a few score years. The form to which these synthetic material forces, this constant abolition of distance between State and State and man and man, are driving us all, even in spite of ourselves, is a common Pax Mundi, a World Commonweal, a federal suppression of armaments, a federal money system, a federal postal system, a federal control of the production and distribution of staple products, a federal direction of main-line sea and land transport and of the movements of population. To these things it seems to me human affairs trend now inexorably. The economic and financial world net grows tighter and closer; war becomes so intimate and inconclusive and destructive as to become impossible. The old ideas may hold our race in a bloody and wasteful subjection for two or three centuries yet; but the Pax Mundi waits at the end of the passage.

A man holding these opinions must necessarily judge the present British Empire without any fanatical loyalty, critically as a possible half-way house or a possible obstacle to a more comprehensive and enduring synthesis. It is not really the same thing as the British "Empire" of 1823, which was a string of trading posts and areas of economic predominance about the world, *plus* John Company's fantastic acquisition of the derelict rule of the Great Mogul. The bulk of the present British "Empire" was created and held together by the steamship. This rendered possible the transfer of considerable masses of population to new territories and the importation of bulky staples, of such things as wheat and cattle, across great stretches of ocean. The Dominions were made by the steamship and the telegraphic cable, and they constitute the freshest, most peculiar feature of the present British Imperial system. Colonies the world has known before, but neither the Greek and Phœnician colonies of the old world nor the American colonies of the eighteenth century were linked closely and abundantly enough to the mother country to

prevent a final estrangement and detachment. The British Dominions to-day are, on the contrary, kept in touch, and more and more effectively kept in touch, with each other and the mother country. Their mutual relationships are unprecedented. Their unity may be enduring.

But when we turn to the relationship of Great Britain and these Dominions on the one hand, to India on the other, we find something entirely different, a new association also, but of absolutely different structure and different capabilities, something accidental and precarious and manifestly provisional. A London company running a system of trading stations, acquired almost inadvertently amidst a wild political welter in India, the heritage of the Great Mogul. Great Britain has taken over this company's possessions, enlarged them, given India peace and a certain unity, educated her people, but not widely nor sufficiently, developed her resources, but not very generously, and manifestly has but the vaguest ideas of her future. The educational and intellectual development of the British people has not kept pace with this rapid expansion of British responsibilities. Our world responsibilities have increased a hundredfold in the last century, but our educated class, our supply of potential rulers, directors and the like, our university organisations have not increased tenfold.

It is an open question whether on the whole we have most hampered or benefited India. Or *vice versa*. But at any rate it must be clear that the association of the Indian system with the Dominion system is an accidental and transitory association. They both happen to be parts of the British system, but there is no necessary connection. The two move at different rates and in divergent directions. A man may be—I know Australians who are—what I may call a Dominion-imperialist, but not an Indian-imperialist. He may believe, as I do, in the need for a sedulous preservation and intensification of the intellectual community of the English-speaking peoples, and in an attentive care for every possibility of understanding and sympathetic co-operation with the United States of America, and at the same time he may be as convinced as I am of our duty and obligation to educate and organise India as speedily as

possible for separation, for a friendly independent existence within the world commonweal of peoples.

We British have not sufficient natural moral and intellectual superiority to the Indian peoples, we have not a sufficiently organised educational system nor a sufficient surplus of highly educated men, to justify our continued usurpation of India's right to think out and work out its own rôle in the confederation of mankind. And we are different from these dusky peoples; we do not work with them easily; we hamper them and they hamper us intolerably. But released from our entanglement with a population six or seven times as numerous as our own, our entanglement with this great mix-up of temperamentally alien peoples, the British and the associated English-speaking communities scattered round the earth, extending their educational organisation and developing their still crude intellectual and political possibilities, may play a reasonable and yet leading part in the great synthesis which will ultimately give the world enduring peace. "Disentangle from India, draw near to America, come out of and keep out of ententes and alliances upon the continent of Europe"; these are the broad lines upon which I conceive the British system may best serve itself and mankind.

So far I have considered the British Empire only from the point of view of the English-speaking Dominions and of India. I will leave Egypt and Palestine, as they ought to be left, outside the discussion. They are, I take it, relaxing protectorates. Nor will I say more than a word or so about purely strategic possessions, Malta, Gibraltar and so forth; they are part of our armament, and their destiny is dependent upon the possibility of a world association sufficiently convincing to make disarmament possible. But there still remain great areas that are neither populated by kindred communities nor subject civilisations, barbaric regions that have been taken over in order to exploit their natural resources and prevent their being monopolised and closed against us by some hostile power. The great overseas "Empire" of Spain in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was of this type. Such areas of economic subjugation are a very ancient type of foreign possession. In such a spirit Carthage once held Corsica, Sardinia and a large part of Spain. In our own lives we have witnessed the sharing-out of tropical Africa among

competing European powers. Behind such division and ownership lies the conception of bitterly competitive, monopolistic trading States as the supreme form of human association. That again is an obsolescent conception.

The Americans decided a century and a half ago that one necessary condition of existence for a federal union of sovereign States was universal free trade. All interference with the free movement of another community's trade, all tariff barriers and the like, are a mild form of war. It must be plain to everyone that the present division of Africa is extremely unstable, and that if the system of competitive powers in Europe is to go on, it is only a question of how long it will take France to feel secure enough against Germany to set about fighting for the whole of raw-material Africa. The organised peace of the world, the coming world civilisation, demands not only a cessation of armaments, but a cessation of commercial discrimination and such-like material injuries.

But these areas of undeveloped natural resources, of unexploited forests and minerals and the like, sustaining only a sparse or undercivilised population, must have administration and development from without. If that is not to be the dangerous task and privilege of a single exploiting State it must be the task of some as yet non-existent body acting in the common interest. Until that federal body can be developed and equipped with forces and resources of its own—it is the most urgent of all necessary precautions against a future great war—there is nothing for us to do but to go on holding these possessions of the third order, without trading discrimination or settlement discrimination, against any other race or people.

It is part of the fantastic nationalism that still plays so astonishing a rôle in the political life of the world, to hold that every definable region of the earth's surface belongs, from sky to centre, to the inhabitants it supports. But with ever increasing facilities of movement this becomes constantly more impossible. It would, for example, place the vast mineral wealth of Labrador at the disposal of a few hundred wandering Red Indians. The conception of a federated world system carries with it the idea that all the land and

sea of the world, all the natural resources of the world, animal, vegetable or mineral, belong to all the people of the world, and that any assignation, reservation, mandate or monopolisation of this or that region is entirely a temporary arrangement to be superseded by that inevitable world control. The British “Empire” in respect to this class of possession is, therefore, in the position of a trustee for an unborn but inevitable heir. Any Federation of Peoples or League of Nations or whatnot that really undertakes the organisation of a world peace must, as a necessary function, inherit all the overseas and alien possessions that are not yet capable of an intelligent participation in world government, whether they are now “owned” by Great Britain or by any other State in the world.

In any world federation that may arise in the course of the next century or so, the English-speaking communities, which already number over two hundred million people, must necessarily play a leading part. How far it will be the leading part, depends very much upon the educational and general creative energy of these communities during the years immediately before us and upon their power of casting aside crippling prejudices and outworn ideas.

It needs no impossible effort to make the English language even now the *lingua franca* of India and China, and the creative imagination embodied in English literature a fertilising power throughout the earth. If I as a consistent republican find little joy in being a subject of a King-Emperor, and if I find much of our British Imperialism repulsively base, narrow, short-sighted and suicidal, that is rather because I overestimate than underestimate the share that our English language and civilisation and peoples may play in the future of mankind.

IX

Winston

10.11.23

In this tragic and confused world it has been my undeserved lot to lead an amused life. All sorts of bright and entertaining and likeable things have been given me and paraded before me. And among others is my friend, Mr. Winston Churchill: not the American Winston but the British Winston. Our relations are relations of intermittent but I trust affectionate controversy. We had a great slanging match some years ago about Russia, and if I remember rightly Mr. Churchill took the count. That is my pleasant impression of the affair. His may be different, of course. Then, in a little book called *Men Like Gods*, one of the characters got out of my control and began to speak and act in a way so like Mr. Churchill's that even I could see the resemblance. I was shocked and alarmed. I had to stun that character and hustle it out of the way, but not before it had made a long characteristic speech and started a war....

Now Mr. Churchill has taken the opportunity afforded by an article I wrote about the British Empire for the British *Empire Review* to open up a fight again. My article, more or less abbreviated, in some cases shorn of its chief arguments, and adorned with the unsolicited

crossheads so dear to editors of spirit, has been extensively syndicated in America, and will no doubt be followed round the earth by flying fragments of his reply. It is a spirited and amusing reply. He calls me Citizen Hoopdriver, which is a fair return for the misbehaviour of my fictitious character, and he laments my discursiveness because I will not stick to my proper occupation of imaginative fiction—which from a gentleman much younger than myself who has danced in turn through Admiralty, War Office, Munitions Ministry, Air Ministry, Colonies and Board of Trade, who has been a brilliant cavalry officer and a still more brilliant newspaper correspondent, who has written eight or nine large but entertaining books and painted some excellent pictures, is pretty considerable cheek. But let that pass.

My original article on the British Empire which appeared in the *Empire Review* pointed out things that are manifest to everyone but the most besotted Imperialist; that the present British Empire is a thing of yesterday, that it is excessively unstable, and that it is bound to undergo great changes and reconstructions in the near future. An Imperial Conference has been struggling in London with the most urgent aspects of these pressing changes. And I should have thought that anyone above the level of a patriotic schoolboy would have seen that any rational constructive change must be in the direction of knitting up the sprawling British system with its kindred civilisations, and especially with the United States of America, in some form of mutual support and co-operation. But Mr. Churchill, regardless of the article he is pretending to criticise, and of all my attacks on the present League of Nations, pretends that I want to put the British Empire forthwith under a world federation upon which Belgians, Chinese, Peruvians, Hottentots, and so forth are to be in a crushing majority. “In this sublime conception,” he writes in his caustic way, “the British inheritance accumulated by the thrift and effort of so many centuries would be liquidated and generously shared with all nations.”

Now this is the poorest of platform nonsense. It is not only nonsense about my proposals, but nonsense about the Empire. The sooner we clear our minds of such cant about thrift and age-long development the better. Putting it as gently as possible, the present

British Empire is not an inheritance but a series of—shall we say acquisitions?—and mostly very recent acquisitions. What is the good of canting in the face of facts? We didn't save up India; Australia wasn't the reward of abstinence.

The British Empire of a hundred years ago was a mere set of scattered trading-stations and a bit of the present Indian Empire. The present British Empire has been assembled by means of the ocean-going steamship and the railway in the last hundred years, and much of it in the last fifty. Beside the Dutch colonial empire it is a thing of yesterday. The steamship made it and maintains it. It is cemented by steamships. If the steamship is presently superseded by the air-liner the British Empire will become like a wall whose mortar has decayed. But Mr. Churchill will hear nothing of new buttresses and sounder binding for this adventitious band of States.

He goes on to a denunciation of my republicanism. Ignoring steamships, banking, Imperial Preference, and a common language, he declares the only sure link of the Empire is "the golden circle of an ancient crown." I would hate to say anything in detraction of a devoted and indefatigable royal family, but I do not believe that there is any effective imperial binding force in the cult of snobbery and sentiment, of which its members are at once the divinities and the sacrificial victims. The healthy natural man is a republican, and has a stiff backbone. Nobody really loves or respects a courtier. One of the chief troubles in the Irish settlement has been the excessive distaste of many Irishmen for the forms of royalty. One of the chief barriers between the British and closer co-operation with America is this king-business. The true cement of our communities must be the sense of equal brotherhood and common aims.

After that Mr. Churchill lapses into sheer naughtiness. There are times when the evil spirit comes upon him and when I can think of him only as a very intractable little boy, a mischievous, dangerous little boy, a knee-worthy little boy. Only by thinking of him in that way can one go on liking him. Suddenly he breaks out about Russia, and I am reminded that he has been one of the chief afflictions of that unfortunate country, that he was largely responsible for the waste of scores of million pounds of British money, in arming first one brigand

chief and then another to attack and further devastate our war-exhausted ally.

He is still unrepentant. He declares that I was a passionate and am now a disappointed pro-Bolshevik, although I have always been an austere critic and witness of Bolshevik incompetence and unpracticalness. But I have also borne my witness to the fact that the Bolshevik leaders are mainly honest men, fighting against stupendous difficulties and leading hard lives, and that the Russian people would far rather have them as its rulers than any of the vicious, plundering, pogromming White Hopes and Czarist reactionaries patronised by Mr. Churchill. These Russians have fought against tremendous difficulties against invading Japanese, Poles, Esthonians, French-subsidised invaders and British-subsidised invaders, and against famine and a pitiless blockade, and against their own ignorance and the atrociously rough and cruel legacy of Czarism, and it seems as if after all they will pull through and lay the foundations of a renascent Russia.

And this is the handful of mud this English statesman hurls at the struggling rulers of this great land with which we are at peace. “They are just a selfish, plundering crew of tyrants and parasites who descended upon an unhappy land and enslaved or slaughtered its people, soiled its honour, ruined its prosperity, devoured its substance, and enriched themselves and their female belongings.”

That about the “female belongings” isn’t at all the little gentleman. It is not even honest abuse. He knows better. Indeed, we all know better, and why Mr. Churchill keeps up this sort of thing defeats my imagination. Russia is a strained and needy country to-day, but it is bleakly moral; for a time there was no prostitution at all there, and probably even to-day there is less prostitution in Russia than in any other country in the world; the age when getting rich and “feminine belongings” played a large part in its affairs ended with Rasputin and the Czardom. But Mr. Churchill has assumed this attitude of vehement hostility to the present Russian Government, and he persists in it with puerile obstinacy, while that great country passes slowly out of the shadows he helped to darken into the dawn of a new age.

X

The other side in France

17.11.23

In several recent articles I have been girding at France, at the destructive egotism of France, at the relentless political cruelty of France. Let me now look at France from another aspect.

Many of us, I suspect, are excessively bitter with France just now because we love France. We are angry because we are jealous about her. She has seen fit to embody herself in the dull, relentless Poincaré; she has set her face like flint harshly and pitilessly against the recovery and peace of Europe, and it is more than we can endure.

A few months ago I made a little tour in Europe, and outside the boundaries of France everywhere I found the name of France the name of division and mischief. The mark had not yet reached its final degradation, but I went about in a very miserable Germany. Every attempt that Germany made to get to her feet and breathe was met by a thrust that sent her back into the black waters that are drowning her. It was natural for Germany to be resentful. But in the farther countries, also, resentment smouldered; they were carrying great armies—the Czech Army is now greater than the British—they were

subjected to a propaganda of an intense and dangerous nationalism, their future was dark with war possibilities, and it was all the work of France. I came back to France through a Europe dying of entangled nationalist policies, and my heart was very black against France.

I went about Paris for some days astonished to see that it did not look consciously wicked. After all—much as I love my native London and much as I delight in the tall vigour of New York—Paris is the Queen of Cities, so gracious and so fine, so hospitably friendly and yet so little meretricious in her quality. I met French friends and talked with them abundantly. I went into Burgundy and into Touraine to meet old friends and new ones, and gradually my nightmare conception of France as an evil spider, stretching its poison claws all over Europe, was mitigated.

That spider is there. It is the old spider of French foreign policy that has lived on through revolutions and empires since the days of the Grand Monarch, but within its limbs it holds so great a literary man as Anatole France, so modern and bold an adventurer in statecraft as Joseph Caillaux, so gentle and sincere a liberalism as that of the gatherings of the Abbaye de Pontigny, and, indeed, a whole inarticulate France of thought, doubt, and righteous intention. It is a France that may at any time thrust Poincaré aside and break through to speech and action and become *the* France. It is an essential and leading part of that world-wide republic of reasonable men which may yet save the world.

I wanted very much to look at and talk to M. Joseph Caillaux. He has always interested me deeply. I had to make a four-hour automobile journey to see him. I went past Chartres Cathedral, and the roads were gay with blue flowers. He is living in his pleasant house and garden in a little brown and white and green provincial town, and there he is stifled and silenced. He may not go within a hundred kilometres of Paris, nor may he go abroad. What he has got to say is not reported in the Press. Only by way of the bookshop can he get anything through to the public. Imagine our British Foreign Office sending my Lord Rothermere into exile and original authorship at Llandrindod Wells or Matlock on account of his interference with its policy! Imagine Mr. Lloyd George or Lord Birkenhead restrained

from excursions to America, and deprived altogether of reverberation!

I lunched with M. and Madame Caillaux and some pleasant neighbours, and we talked of books and flowers and such-like agreeable topics. We exchanged telegraphic greetings with M. Anatole France, whom I had hoped to meet there. M. Caillaux, I learnt incidentally, can take walks and play tennis, but he may not go shooting. He is far too dangerous a man, the French Government thinks, to be entrusted with a shot-gun.

Afterwards we two walked about the garden and talked about the state of Europe. M. Caillaux is neither Anglophile nor Anglophobe, but he thinks, as I do, that Western Europe can only do its full duty to the rest of the world when it is worked as a unity. Reconciliation of the Frenchman and the German has been the dominant idea of all his statecraft. We discussed the riddle why Big Business and the big industrialists are the fiercest, most mischievous of all patriots. We concluded it was due to the fact that they work for profits and not for service, and that a flag means a tariff and such an artificial enhancement of profits as no unified working could give. And finance which is international in outlook is by its nature not creative and revolutionary but watchful, statistical, and extractive. Then also I broached the question whether, if private capital in industry and finance could not give us peace, we must prepare for a harder road to internationalism through the social revolution. And so to other topics.

He asked me not to be hard against France. “You think,” he said, “that this fear of Germany coming back again is a false fear—an excuse for aggression. It isn’t. It’s in the blood of our people. Think! Here we are in the heart of France, and within a little more than a hundred years this countryside has heard the guns of an invader four times, in 1814, 1815, 1871, and again in 1914.”

M. Caillaux stood before his house and watched me get into the automobile that would take me to the Paris he may not visit, and waved his friendly “Good-bye.” Next year, perhaps, they will let him return, he hopes—or the year after. But he is already sixty....

But the most interesting man from my present point of view that I met in France was a man under no outward restraint at all. This was

the late M. Philippe Millet, the editor of the *Petit Parisien*, one of the big official papers. We have been friends for many years, we saw a good deal of each other at the Washington Conference, and we had talked to each other very freely and frankly on many occasions about international relations. For long he had maintained an entirely civilised attitude towards the European settlement; he had supported various schemes of economic reconciliation, and he had opposed the occupation of the Ruhr very vigorously. I took him to task for his support of M. Poincaré.

His apologetics went in this fashion, and I think they are typical of the attitude of a considerable section of Frenchmen. He admitted the Ruhr occupation was an outrage, but he argued that once it was done it closed the door on any possibility of an understanding with Germany. Germany had been so antagonised that there was now nothing left for a Frenchman but to go on destroying her. He was like a man on an omnibus that was running away downhill. You must do your best to get control of the thing, but—there is no going back to the top of the hill. France has got Germany by the throat, and such a level of hate and despair has been reached that *she dares not let go*.

Of course, M. Poincaré does not want to let go. But I believe the middling mass of Frenchmen, of whom Philippe Millet was so typical, a mass which, with the parties of the Left, probably constitutes a majority of the French, would welcome any outside help that would enable them to discontinue the strangulation and dismemberment of Central Europe. An American Government and a British Government united enough, understanding enough, and tactful enough, to intervene wisely and generously could swing all that central mass away from Poincaré. A foolish intervention might very easily throw it into a passion of patriotic fear. Its incalculable behaviour is a riddle all Europe is guessing at. The hope of European civilisation rests largely on this central body of French opinion getting to some sort of effective expression before it is too late. The French elections in 1924 will be a very crucial time in human history.

XI

The last of the victorians

24.11.23

Mr. Asquith is now, to use the phrase he coined for a contemporary, the last of the Victorian “giants.” He is the leader of some sort of Liberal Party in England, the oldest and the ripest, I am told, though I confess I am quite unable to make head or tail of these various Liberal parties in England nowadays, and he is always trying to lead his little band back to the nineteenth century, when there were ever so many “giants” in the land, not to mention the Grand Old Man, and when political life made up for its complete want of seriousness by a pompous solemnity and vast personal enthusiasms. Prime Ministers in those days loomed vast; they were none of your little chaps who can hide behind bull-dog pipes and say nuffin. Our Leaders, figures of Pantomimic size, filled the stage and said—*floods*. They were practically all that there was on the stage. The crumbling peace of Europe and the world, the conflict of labour and order with adventurous capital, were not staged in those days. At most one heard of these things in the Legislature as one sometimes catches a rumble of vans and cabs in a London theatre. In the House they dealt with only the thin shadows of great issues;

with the Free Breakfast Table, Unsectarian Religious Teaching, Leasehold Enfranchisement, and the like.

One of the most pleasing traits of the Victorian giants was their tremendous scholarly evasion of all complete statement. The vulgarity of a plain assignment of a thing to its broad roots and general principles was never committed. In such matters Mr. Asquith is finely representative of his period. He has to perfection that ability to deal with a part of an issue as if it were the whole which was characteristic of the great Victorian scholars and gentlemen. If Mr. Asquith were a mechanic, and you asked him to make you an automobile, he would presently produce two wheels, a clutch, and a radiator with so perfect and dignified a manner that you would hardly realise that you had not the complete car until you stepped through it. You would feel it ungracious to complain. When Mr. Asquith drew the sword and threw away the scabbard, he did it with so fine a gesture that you scarcely noted that most of the sword wasn't there. If Mr. Asquith were a domestic hen he would lay eggs consisting of about two-thirds of a shell and as much yolk as would cover a sixpence, but he would cluck so bravely that you would credit him with a complete omelette. I do not blame him, it was the style of his time; but his time has passed, and this is a world too urgent and dangerous for the ample deficiencies of those spaciously empty years.

These remarks are provoked by the fact that Mr. Asquith and his associated and rival Liberal leaders—I can never tell which is which—are now engaged in unfurling the Banner of Free Trade in Great Britain. Encumbered with an immense and growing burden of unemployed workmen Britain is thinking of all sorts of eleventh-hour expedients. Schemes of preference within the Empire, leading towards an Empire Zollverein, are very much to the fore. And in reply this old Free Trade, which figured so largely in the political history of Victorian times, is to be brought out of the shed again, and furbished up and sent round the country to see what it will do for Liberalism.

Now nothing could be more typical than Free Trade of this peculiar incompleteness of the political methods of the "giants" of the "heroic" Victorian Age to which I have already called attention. It is a one-wheeled, engineless, body-less Liberal automobile. It is a project to

keep down one's natural frontier in respect to inward and outward trade, and it ignores all the correlated measures that should go with this most desirable abolition. It ignores the fact that nearly all the separate sovereign competitive States into which the world is divided are always actively engaged in mutual injury, sometimes frankly in open warfare but always by fiscal trickery, monetary tactics, diversion of trade, and the like amiable activities. True Free Trade must be mutual. One-sided Free Trade is like disarmament in the face of malignant military preparation. And if there is to be real Free Trade between any two countries then certain other things follow necessarily, though they never appear on the party programmes and banners.

Production will tend to gravitate to the regions of maximum advantage, and so there must also be a free movement of population over the frontiers to the regions of most advantageous employment. If there is not such free movement, then one of the States may suffer from unemployment in this or that industry and social degeneration while the other is enjoying high wages. But movement of population and the shifting of many industries across frontiers will affect military efficiency, and so there can be no real Free Trade between any two countries unless they are ensured not only against mutual attack but by a mutual guarantee against attack.

Free Trade is, in fact, only a practical proposal between countries prepared also for free movements of population between each other and for a pooling of their defensive resources and foreign policy. The way to permanent and satisfactory Free Trade lies in a steady extension of leagues between friendly peoples prepared for that much waiver of their sovereign independence. But only peoples near the same educational level and with closely similar standards of comfort and behaviour can contemplate so intimate a union as this. There might be such a league of the Latin-American States, or of the English-speaking and Scandinavian and other North-European States, but not of any much more extensive coalescences at present. So long as a State remains potentially at war with any other State, Free Trade between them is a dream.

Great Britain in the Victorian period had a practical monopoly of modern industrial production and benefited by an open frontier that

gave her workers cheap food and so kept labour cheap. That was a temporary and now vanished condition of affairs. So long as States insist on their sovereign independence they must be prepared to use tariffs just as they must be prepared to use armies. It is the price of the flag.

Tariffs corrupt. That is true, just as war contracts do. But the way to escape from these diseases of conflict does not lie in the maintenance of fiscal non-resistance by this or that independent, irresponsible State, but in a creative foreign policy that seeks union and coalescence, and aims, openly and educationally, through coalescence in a broadening series, to reach at last world Free Trade, world freedom of movement, and an organised world peace.

But Mr. Asquith will never tell us he means anything so intelligible as that. He will just wave the banner of Free Trade as though it meant anything the imagination of the voter might like. That was how the giants did their business in the grand old days, and he will never do his business in any other way. And it is because of these splendid old traditions of pompous vagueness that more and more of the liberal-minded people of Britain drift towards the Labour camp.

XII

Politics as a public nuisance

1.12.23

In the United States of America they know when their elections are coming, and prepare for them; in Great Britain they come unheralded, like earthquakes and tidal waves. They may come and come again; there is no period of immunity.

It is only yesterday that in Great Britain we were all speculating about this Mr. Baldwin, who had become Prime Minister. What was he? Where had he come from? Nobody knew. From the first he seemed to share our doubts about himself. He hid as much as possible behind a big, big, manly pipe, and made wise little speeches about nothing in particular at colleges and boys' schools. He claimed to be a cousin of Mr. Rudyard Kipling. Now he seems to have given way to panic at the conspicuousness of his position. The European situation is frightful, and the state of affairs at home is miserable; and I think he has plunged this country into all the expense and confusion of a General Election, in the hope of getting back to the old smoking-room at home, wherever it is, and tranquillity.

Except in Tasmania and Ireland, where they have Proportional Representation and an approach to political sanity, all the elections of the English-speaking democracies are profoundly silly affairs. The common voter hasn't a dog's chance of expressing his real opinion of things. Some organisations or other put up a couple of candidates for his constituency, and he votes for the one associated with the political leaders he dislikes and distrusts least. When the issues are manifold, as they are in Britain now, the results may be preposterous. They may fail altogether to indicate the feeling of the country about any public question at all. The voter is generally in the case of a man who wants to go shooting, and is confronted with the choice of taking the family Bible and some cartridges, or a boiled fowl and a gun.

The cardinal fact of the contest is that France is destroying the economic life of Central Europe, with which the prosperity of Great Britain is bound up. Great Britain is congested with unemployed, before whom there does not seem to be any prospect of employment. In the face of this Mr. Baldwin proposes tariffs to make food and everything dearer without increasing the purchasing power of any but the very rich; and Mr. Ramsay MacDonald proposes a levy on large fortunes. Mr. Asquith, to whom Mr. Churchill the anti-Bolshevik and Mr. Lloyd George have rallied, raises, as I have already noted in these articles, the banner of Free Trade—although Free Trade is already in operation in Great Britain without conspicuous success. And nobody says anything in particular about France.

Under these circumstances anything may happen. Exaggerated estimates of the effect of the tariff upon food prices will be used to scare the struggling voter, and particularly the women, against Protection, and—as the Labour Party has no Press worth talking about—tremendous lies will be told about the Capital Levy. It will be represented as a raid upon the savings bank deposits of the servant girl and the children's money-boxes, although as a matter of fact it is not to touch any fortune under five thousand pounds, and only begins to press heavily upon twenty thousand and upward. The Labour leaders, being for the most part respectable but inaudible men, will never get that over to the public in time. And in the ensuing

panic and scrimmage it is quite possible that that extraordinary old omnibus, the Liberal Party, with Mr. Asquith the elder statesman, Mr. Churchill the junker, Mr. Lloyd George the rather world-stained democrat, Sir John Simon, Mr. Asquith's once prospective successor, and a miscellany of other people, pledged really to no more than the negative policy of no Protection and no Capital Levy, will make quite a respectable run and get quite a large proportion of its four hundred odd passengers into Westminster. And what they will do there Heaven knows. Possibly fight among themselves, and have another dissolution.

Meanwhile, as the struggle for the wheel goes on, the British ship of state will drift through the winter as it has drifted through the autumn, and M. Poincaré will continue to do what he likes with Europe.

Now this is really too preposterous a way of running the affairs of a great people. It is bound to end in some great disaster. These spasmodic appeals to the country whenever a Prime Minister gets frightened by the aspect of the skies or whenever a quarrelsome group has to be reunited somehow, produce a terrible vacillation and ineffectiveness in the national conduct. It is time Great Britain came up to date with a triennial or quadrennial election of the Legislature, after the American and French fashion, and then stayed *put*. And it is time, too, that Great Britain went beyond, and gave a lead to America and most of the world by abandoning the present method of voting with a single vote in a limited constituency, which absolutely destroys any real choice of representation by the common man. The only civilised method of democracy is Proportional Representation; in large constituencies returning many members there is no other method which gives the individual voter a reasonable opportunity of expressing his real preference. It is the right way, and all other ways are wrong and bad. This present election in Great Britain is the *reductio ad absurdum* of the current system. In the seething mass of British opinion there are:

Out-and-out Protectionists hostile to Russia and France.

Ditto friendly to Russia but hostile to France.

Ditto hostile to Russia but abject to France.

Protectionists for industry but not for food, hostile to France.

Ditto, but “Hats off to France.”

Anti-Bolshevik Free Traders like Mr. Churchill.

Free Traders friendly to Russia.

Any of the above may or may not be in frantic opposition to an imaginary Capital Levy upon everybody’s savings.

Labourite Free Traders weak on the Capital Levy.

Labourite Free Traders strong on the Capital Levy.

Labourites strong on the Capital Levy, but weak on Free Trade.

All of the above may be weak or strong or hostile about the present League of Nations.

All of the above may be strong for the new education, or they may be anti-educational.

And the poor mutt of a voter in any particular constituency has to indicate his opinion of things by voting for one of three gentlemen or ladies selected by the three local political clubs. As candidates they will do as little as possible in the way of positive statements and pledges. They will engage chiefly in hostile noises against the other parties. We shall never get any clear indication from this election upon any issue of any importance at all. We shall get no clear mandate either to deal with France or submit to France. We shall get no clear indication of the feelings of the people about Protection or Free Trade. We shall have only a slight measure of the panic about the Capital Levy caused by its misrepresentation. The thing is silly. It is a monstrous foolery in the face of the needs and dangers of the present time. The new Parliament will be just as feeble and insecure as the old Parliament, just as uncertain of popular support, and just as incapable of taking a strong line in the tragic pass to which British affairs are coming.

XIII

The re-emergence of Mr. Lloyd George

8.12.23

That muddle-headed process, the General Election, is over in Great Britain; the votes have been counted and the results are out—and everybody now is free to speculate what it was that the British Demos was trying to say to the world.

The idiotic simplicity of the voting method employed leaves the intelligent observer entirely free to put whatever interpretation he likes upon these results, and the British and foreign Press are taking the fullest advantage of this freedom. Confronted by a complex of issues and two or three usually very unpalatable candidates, the poor voter has voted anyhow or abstained from voting. Poor Demos might just as well have stayed away from the polls altogether for any chance he has had of expressing himself about France or about Russia or about the Singapore dockyards or anything of positive importance in the outer world. The single non-transferable vote system which prevails in the British communities and in America is almost as good a political gag as the old Russian autocracy, and may in the end provoke as violent a reaction. One may conclude that

a great number of women voters were scared by the thought of high prices under a Tariff, and that the Capital Levy is not the bogy it promised to be. We shall have no Tariff. Beyond that there are no clear indications of the Will of the People.

So instructed, Parliament reassembles.

The chief result of the convulsion is that Mr. Lloyd George is back in the middle of the limelight in his original rôle of a great Liberal leader. Gestures of reconciliation of an almost scandalous warmth have characterised all the chief Liberal gatherings, and it is a wonder to the rest of mankind that British Liberalism ever permitted even an appearance of dissension. And Mr. Lloyd George has completely and triumphantly come back. It is his victory as much as it is anybody's victory.

Like nearly all Welshmen and many Englishmen, I have a strong but qualified affection for Mr. Lloyd George. How far that affection is due to Mr. Lloyd George's own merits, and how far it is due to the endearing caricatures of Low, I will not attempt to determine. But we like his go and we like his bounce and we like his smile. Unless he is caught vociferating a speech, all his photographs, even the most casual snapshots, show him smiling the most disarming of smiles. All Englishmen, except perhaps the Duke of Northumberland, are radicals, subverters, equalitarians, and revolutionaries, though very many of us restrain and conceal these qualities, and in some they are altogether subconscious. (I say "Englishmen" here, and I do not add "Englishwomen.") In Mr. Lloyd George—particularly when he smiles or makes a peer—we recognise our dearest suppressions. His creations roused the elder peerage at last to open revolt, and that amused us. Were it not for him and the new newspaper adventurers of the last quarter-century, Britain would still be ruled by the Cecils and Society.

America, I suspect, feels much the same about him. In the United States they pick him out from among all other figures in British politics as theirs. He is much more in the American than the British tradition. Ever so many American statesmen began as provincial lawyers. The journey from that Welsh solicitor's office to Whitehall is the nearest parallel British political life has yet given to the Log Cabin to White House adventure.

And Mr. Lloyd George has never had a classical education. He can quote Welsh but not Greek. A contempt for learning—that is to say, for classical learning—is another of the hidden things in the soul of every ordinary Englishman and every plain American. We know secretly that stuff is an imposture. But we never argue about it—even when Mr. President Coolidge betrays a belief that an ordinary classical education involves an understanding of human history. We know in our bones that it does not. It is not that we despise knowledge, but that we do not believe that a little Greek and Latin and a few worn quotations are knowledge. And on the whole Mr. Lloyd George is a very knowledgeable man.

In no sense of the word, of course, is he an educated man. Lincoln was. Starting from an almost illiterate adolescence, Lincoln, by an industrious self-education, achieved wisdom, achieved a profound and comprehensive perception of world realities; his mind could handle at last anything the mind of a President of men ever had to handle with supreme mastery. But Mr. Lloyd George has never built up a strong and comprehensive body of ideas in that fashion. He has never realised the need. His mind has not the solid substance of Lincoln's mind. It is a quick feminine mind, with extremely rapid intuitions. His judgments are apt to be as just as they are quick, but he has never got them together into any system. They are immediate and superficial. He is mentally disconnected. He retains the prejudices and general ideas of his upbringing. He has no vision or sense of the world as a whole, no worked-out conception of the part he might play in the human story. So it was that opportunity caught him at Versailles and laid him bare.

Within two years of the signing of that treaty, for which he was mainly responsible, he had learnt better and was trying in his quite feminine indirect way to mitigate and undo it. He will go on trying. He means well—always. And he was almost the first statesman of the Coalition Government to realise the folly of an inveterate quarrel with New Russia. In dealing with Russia he will be unhampered by that violent anti-Bolshevik, Mr. Winston Churchill, who is again among the "outs." His inconsistencies trouble the common British voter hardly at all. The logical Frenchman points to his broken pledges. This from the French point of view constitutes dishonesty. The Anglo-Saxon

mind realises that to be honest one must be inconsistent. We have all made our mistakes, and muddled back out of them. Life is a puzzling thing full of surprises. The one thing the British will never understand is the tremendous persistence of M. Poincaré. It impresses them as invincible stupidity.

Both Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Winston Churchill denounced Socialism, but while Mr. Churchill really meant Socialism by Socialism, Mr. Lloyd George only meant a tendency to vote for Labour instead of for Lloyd George. By nature and tradition Mr. Lloyd George is on the Left side in politics, and his experience of Tories and rich men during the last few years has probably restored his leftward tendencies to their primitive vigour. As his record in the Ministry of Munitions shows, he has no respect for money: he throws it about, he can be careless and rough with it, it is a means to an end, and he has probably accumulated very little. Returned to power and faced by a spectacle of economic débacle, he is capable of taxing, levying upon, and confiscating the property of the rich to an extent that would make Mr. Henderson white with terror and throw Mr. Ramsay MacDonald into convulsions of Scotch caution. (But mark you, it won't be Socialism. He is against Socialism.)

So Mr. Lloyd George emerges again from his temporary eclipse seated on the back of a united Liberal Party and already leaning a little to the Left. As the world situation develops he will probably lean more and more to the Left. Until he leans right over the Socialist programme. He has with him the affectionate distrust of a great multitude of his countrymen. They like his smile, have a profound sympathy for his tendencies, and wish they knew more of his intentions. He is by far the most vigorous and popular personality in the new House. He may do anything. This election that has reunited the Liberal Party in his interest has cost the country over two million pounds. We trust him to give us a show for our money.

XIV

Spain and Italy whisper together

15.12.23

The noise of the British General Election subsides, and we realise that a crisis of supreme insignificance to the world in general is over. The affair has had much the same importance as a wayside epileptic fit. The patient falls into convulsive movements, emits strange noises. Presently it is all over, and the patient seems very little the worse for it. Britain's herself again, and nobody can tell what it meant at all. One can only hope that there will not be another fit for some time. But there is no knowing. Great Britain is subject to these fits.

The space and attention that long-established custom has directed to these manifestations has a little distracted attention from an event of much greater significance: the coming together of Spain and Italy.

It became inevitable when President Poincaré made his speech about Black France, probably the most stupid speech ever made by a responsible statesman. There were Frenchmen who saw in his policy the certainty of a final isolation face to face with a Germany driven to desperation. He rebuked them for their fears. There were not forty million Frenchmen, he said, but a hundred million. He called in sixty million Africans to redress the balance of the population in

Europe. He directed the attention of all the world to the steady progress of the Black French policy. For this the French were building their submarines, to protect their transports on their way from Africa to France. That was admitted even in 1921 at Washington. But now all Europe turns its eyes to the great railway developments of France in Africa, and sees the material confirmation of President Poincaré's threat. These railways are plainly not development railways; they are strategic railways. They are as surely strategic railways as the lines the German Imperialists made to the Belgian frontier.

That White France that so many Americans and English love like a second motherland, the White France of the Great Revolution, of Lafayette and Mirabeau, of Voltaire and Pasteur and Anatole France, France the propagandist of liberty, equality, and fraternity throughout the world, France the guardian of art and of personal freedom and of the gracious life, passes into eclipse beneath this black shadow. Black France is ousting her from men's imaginations and sympathies.

It was impossible for Italy and Spain to see this scheme coming into reality under their eyes without an intense repulsion. Response on their part followed almost automatically. The French organisation of North Africa jostles both Italy and Spain intolerably. The fragmentation of Germany, the impoverishment of England, will leave both these countries, if they remain disunited, in a position of helplessness under the domination of what all Europe is coming to regard as the most egoistic of nations. Any reasonably intelligent boy of sixteen who had followed the course of events could have told President Poincaré that the necessary result of his Black French policy and his Black France speech would be an understanding between Italy and Spain for joint preparations to cut the umbilical cord between France in Europe and France in Africa whenever a due occasion might arise.

A glance at a map of Europe will show how comparatively easy it would be to do that. The Balearic Isles of Spain are less than two hundred miles from Italian Sardinia. Across that line the transports bringing the Africans to Europe must go—four hundred miles of open sea. Confronted with the map that stream of transports pouring black

troops into France is seen to be the most foolish dream that has ever corrupted the policy of a great nation. Neither Spain nor Italy nor Britain, nor, indeed, mankind at large, can allow it. They cannot afford to allow it.

Yet it is upon this project, doomed beforehand, that the whole forward policy of France has rested and rests to-day. Two virtual dictators, Mussolini and General de Rivera, talk quietly together and look at it, and it begins to fade.

That is the obvious significance of this recent visit of King Alfonso with his minister to Rome. But more than that one paramount question seems to have been discussed. Both Spain and Italy are still in form constitutional monarchies modelled or remodelled in the nineteenth century on the not very congenial British pattern—which in that time was the political fashion everywhere. Recent events have thrust the monarchs of both countries a little aside in favour of virtual dictators. Except for the persistence of the crown, both Italy and Spain have taken on a new resemblance to the republics of Latin America. Those countries seem to find their natural form of political expression neither in royal rule nor in parliamentary forms, but in some sort of dictator-president. The social and intellectual life and probably the political thought of Latin America may be in as close touch and may even be in closer touch with the European mother countries than is the case between Great Britain and her Dominions. There is a great Italian population in several South American States; and everywhere in Italy and the Spanish Peninsula one comes upon the houses of rich “Americanos”—from the Argentine and Brazil, and so forth. And it is quite easy to believe the rumours that the conversations in Rome went beyond the Mediterranean and considered the possibility of still greater alliances and understandings in support of the Latin idea, from which France, which is neither northern with the British and Germans nor Latin with the Italians, but half and half between them, and incurably and self-centredly France, may be excluded.

I will not write here now of how an understanding of that sort might affect the relationship of its participants to the League of Nations, nor will I speculate how the United States and the Monroe doctrine would be touched by such a coalescence of old and new world

Latinism. The first, most obvious reaction of this new move towards a higher unity is upon France. I do not know how far the newspaper consortium in France will allow the news of what has happened to reach the white population of France. For long the European French have been kept in profound ignorance of the gathering British distrust of their foreign policy, and in still profounder ignorance of the reasons for that distrust. I believe attempts are now being made in France to represent this coming together of Spain and Italy as an alliance to keep Britain out of the Mediterranean. It is nothing of the sort. It is an alliance to restrain French Africa. But there have been signs since King Alfonso's visit to Rome of a dim realisation even on the part of M. Poincaré of the circle of dismay and disapproval that is closing in slowly and steadily upon France.

I wish Frenchmen travelled more. I wish they were more receptive of unflattering news. I wish they could realise the enormous distress with which civilised men everywhere, in New York and London as in Rome and Madrid, watch their fantastic dance over the broken body of Germany to absolute isolation in the world's affairs.

XV

Latin America and the League

22.12.23

In my previous article I discussed the visit of King Alfonso to Rome, and the profound significance to France and the world in general of the conversations that must have taken place there between the Spanish and Italian dictators. Among other issues was the possibility of a Latin League, comprehending the two European peninsulas and Latin America. I return to this idea.

At the least it is an imaginative gesture on the parts of General de Rivera and Signor Mussolini on a higher creative level than anything we have had from European statecraft for some time. At the best it may be an opening of a way towards a real league of peoples for the preservation of the world's peace.

It is suggested that all these Latin peoples, who have so much in common, who are so admirably equipped for a common understanding and the achievement of a common destiny, should withdraw from that lamentable cul-de-sac of good intentions, the existing League of Nations, in order to group themselves together for collective action in the world's affairs. Now that is a very hopeful idea. Let us see just how it might be extended. Suppose the British

Empire also presently came out of the League in order to be free for a parallel and still more potent grouping with the United States of the English-speaking communities. It seems to me that in these rearrangements we should have two great steps made towards a real conference of the peoples of the earth.

The next step would be the entry of France into an association with these two groups. France, half northern and half Latin, would be free to relieve the world of its nightmare dream of La France Nègre, because it could find its security in a new Atlantic Association. It could deal with these two agglomerations as a necessary associate and link and intermediary; and Paris, so balanced, could remain a world centre instead of sinking to the level of a mere nationalist capital. That threefold grouping need have no fear of a Germany restored and a Russia reborn.

It is of supreme importance, if we are to get on to any real and effective world confederation, that it should be a gathering of linguistic, racial, and cultural groups rather than of nationalist governments—trailing their infernal “foreign” policies into its deliberations. That is the most obvious defect of the Geneva situation; it is not a gathering of world representatives, but a bargain- and alliance-hunting place for diplomatists. One of the most obvious consequences of such larger aggregations of kindred peoples would be that in them the old nationalist and imperialist policies that still divide and afflict the world would be dissolved and lost. Spain and Italy linked up to Latin America would find little support for adventures in North Africa. Great Britain, tied a little closer to the United States, would be under a new restraint towards Mesopotamia or Asia Minor.

This idea of a league of peoples into which the Powers of the world would come not as “national” sovereign States, but as great groups of States, each group with something like a common culture, is not a new one. It was suggested in the memorandum of 1918 upon which the British propaganda against Germany was based. But President Wilson and the British Foreign Office ignored that, and indeed most other documents and facts, when the existing League of Nations was brought into being—and so we have this preposterous

body at Geneva, which is, and must be, I maintain, for any large and grave international occasions, a hopelessly useless body.

I use the word “preposterous.” That may seem a harsh, excessive epithet to many readers. They believe in this sham. They give it their love and enthusiasm. They burn indignantly at my criticisms and treat me as an enemy to Peace and mankind. But I would put before them, mainly in the words of Mr. H. Wilson Harris, a little story of what happened at Geneva this year, and I would ask them to remember that this is an assembly from which the sixty millions of Germany and the hundred odd millions of Russia are inexorably barred out—presumably as unfit for representation.

Abyssinia is not barred out. Abyssinia is now taking its part with France, Sweden, Britain, and the other great nations of the world—in whatever the League of Nations is permitted to do. Here is the account of the coming of Abyssinia. It must surely fill the citizens of the United States with envious admiration. “The delegation consisted of two dark-skinned native representatives and a French adviser,” Count Robert Linant de Bellefonds, bearing a letter of authorisation from “Her Majesty the Queen of the Kings of Ethiopia.” A few minor questions had to be settled by telegram between the Queen’s Court and Geneva. Ethiopia renounced the slave trade and one or two other little domestic oddities by cable, and on September 28, “amid resounding cheers, an impressive Ethiopian, clad in a black silk cape over a kind of surplice, and with white duck trousers gathered in at the ankles, slowly mounted the tribune, and, settling a pair of gold-rimmed glasses with much deliberation on his swarthy nose, proceeded to repeat an incomprehensible declaration in his native tongue”

—of the best intentions in the world.

The assembly presently proceeded to re-elect the non-permanent members of the Council. China was dropping out, and Poland, the closest ally of France in Europe, was put forward. Abyssinia, now a seasoned member of upward a week’s standing, became a passionate supporter of Poland. Cablegrams suddenly appeared from the Queen of the Kings, “intimating that the Government of that distant and dusky realm was earnest in its support of Poland’s

candidature *on account of the historic ties which bound the two countries to one another*."

I wish I could have heard Count Robert de Bellefonds on these historic ties. I think that justifies my "preposterous" up to the hilt. I think, too, it justifies my reiterated assertion that the constitution of the League is so hopeless, so childish, so diplomatically conceived and useless, that nothing but reorganisation from the ground upward can give us a proper organ for the expression of the real need and desire for unity in the world.

Of course, Count Robert Linant de Bellefonds has led this tame vote for France into the ring partly in emulation and partly in derision of the British troupe of young lions, and the absolutely domesticated Indian elephant. France scored a point against Britain. To this the League has come in four brief years. Anyone but a pedant could have foretold this sort of thing, as the necessary fruit of the principle of one sovereign State one vote.

I hope the full significance of the Abyssinian turn has not been lost on the Latin American States. It may help them to realise why there should be this feeling in Spain and Italy against the League, and the excellent reasons there are for setting up some new association for the working out and expression of the will of the Latin civilisation as a whole in the world's affairs. It may help their decision towards a creative withdrawal. For the world is in urgent need of a real League of Nations and a real conference of peoples—this costume parade at Geneva is a mere mockery of its hopes.

XVI

Cosmopolitan and international

29.12.23

Sometimes words for quite unaccountable reasons get down on their luck. They lose caste, they drop out of society, nobody will be seen about with them.

A word for which I have the greatest sympathy is “Cosmopolitan.” I want to see it restored to a respectable use. It is a fine word and it embodies a fine idea. But for more than half the English-speaking people who hear it, I suppose, it carries with it the quality of a shady, illicit individual with a bad complexion, a falsified passport and a police record. This creature to be typical should be mixed up with the drug traffic and a danger to the inexperienced and honest everywhere; Monte Carlo is the idea of heaven for such a Cosmopolitan, and Ellis Island the corresponding hell. I don’t know how it has come about that this good word Cosmopolitan has got so firmly attached to the trunks of such gentry, for the proper term that should be there is surely “extreme individualist.” Even “Internationalist” would be a better word for a man or woman who passes between country and country and belongs to none. But I do

not see why we should punish a word because it has been stupidly misapplied.

For what is Cosmopolis but the City of the World, and what can a Cosmopolitan be but a good citizen wherever he goes? That is what I want to be and not International—which seems to me an altogether homeless adjective. It means, I take it, “in between nations”—in between the substantial things of life. The only truly international thing is the ocean outside territorial waters. Trying to be International is like trying to walk about on the cracks between the boards, instead of walking on the floor; you could only do it if you had feet like skates, and I cannot understand why we tack this dismal adjective nowadays on to all our current attempts to get human brotherhood put upon a broader basis than parochial or national feeling. I am an Englishman and a Cosmopolitan, a good Englishman, and I hope a good Cosmopolitan; I do not see why I should repudiate my own original plank or any other planks because I want to go freely over all the floor.

My emotional equipment as a faithful son of England I claim to be sound and complete. To the end of my days I shall think of England, the kindly England of the south-east, London and Essex, Kent and Sussex, as my own very particular region of the world. London is mine, as no other city can ever be; I have seen it grow and change and become ever more wonderful and beautiful and dear to me since first I came up to it, to the stupendous gloomy vault of Cannon Street Station, half a century ago. But Paris also, open and elegant, with a delicate excitement in its air; New York, the towering and beautiful; many a prim South German town; Venice; Rome, as I remember it, before reviving prosperity and that vile monument to Victor Emmanuel vulgarised it so hopelessly; frosty and sullen Petersburg, have charmed me, and I want a share in their happiness and welfare, I want to possess them also and to care for them, and I am ready to barter the welcome of my London in exchange. Cosmopolis is all these cities and a thousand others, and I want to be free of them all.

But the world is full of stupid people who will not let me be free of Cosmopolis. They make my England almost a gaol for me by inventing a thousand inconveniences if I want to go out of it. There

are passport offices and tariff offices stuck across every path of travel and desire; there are differences in coinage and a multitude of petty restrictions to exasperate every attempt I make at holiday in my Europe. The streets of Cosmopolis are up and barricaded; I want to break down these barricades.

There is not a reasonable and honest man in the world who does not want a uniform coinage about the earth. Only the greedy, cunning exchange speculator—and idiot collectors—want either varied coinages or a variety of stamps in this world. If the League of Nations at Geneva wasn't the dismallest sham on the earth, it would insist upon running the posts of Europe and having a mint of its own. Wherever one goes in Europe one finds oneself loaded up with foreign money that ceases to be current after a day's journey, and with useless postage stamps. And every silly little scrap of Europe is pretending to be a separate economic system—in mysterious conflict with other economic systems. Every hundred miles or so in Europe there is a fresh tariff barrier.

Everybody, except for a few monopolists and officials, loses by tariffs. They are devices for gaining a little for some particular section of mankind at the cost of an infinitely greater loss to Cosmopolis. Mean and narrow in conception, they are abominable in action. It is an intolerable nuisance to be searched for tobacco and matches by some sedulous eater of garlic before one may enter France from England—they even turn out your pockets now—and to have one's portmanteau locks broken and one or two minor possessions stolen whenever one goes into Italy. At Dover they read the books you have with you to see if they are improper. The quays of New York again, after the arrival of a liner, are a grossly indecent spectacle. They go half-way back from civilisation to the barbecue of a foreign sailor by cannibal wreckers. Much as I like New York, I never miss a thrill of intense anger when the large hand of the Customs officer routs among my under-clothes.

And these are only the minor inconveniences of not living in Cosmopolis; they are just the superficial indications that the world one moves about in is a thin crust hanging insecurely above the abyss of war. I do not believe that any mere Internationalism and League of Nations that leaves the coinages separate, and the

Customs Houses on the frontiers, and the passport officials busy at their little wickets with their nasty rubber stamps, which leaves the mean profits of tariff manipulation possible for influential people, which denies by all these things our common ownership and common responsibility for all the world, can ever open the way to world peace.

I am for world-control of production and of trade and transport, for a world coinage, and the confederation of mankind. I am for the super-State, and not for any League. Cosmopolis is my city, and I shall die cut off from it. When I die I shall have lived only a part of my possible life, a sort of life in a corner. And this is true of nearly all the rest of mankind alive at the present time. The world is a patchwork of various sized internment camps called Independent Sovereign States, and we are each caught in our bit of the patchwork and cannot find a way of escape. Because most of us have still to realise, as I do, a passionate desire to escape. But a day will come when Custom House officers will be as rare as highwaymen in Sussex, and when the only passports in the world will be found alongside of Aztec idols and instruments of torture and such-like relics of superstition in our historical museums.

XVII

The parliamentary triangle

5.1.24

That profoundly absurd body the British Parliament will meet on January 8, and the recondite and fascinating game of party politics will be resumed under novel conditions with three parties, none of which have a majority, and with a Labour Party in sight, not of power, but of office.

I call the British Parliament an absurd body with set and measured intention. It is twice as big as it ought to be for efficient government; it carries a load, a fatty encumbrance, of more than three hundred undistinguished and useless members; much of its procedure, its method of taking divisions for example, is idiotically wasteful of the nation's time; and it is elected by methods so childishly crude that it represents neither the will nor the energy nor the intelligence of the country. It dissipates and caricatures the national consciousness. Assembled, it will have nothing definite to say to France, Germany, Russia, America, or to the festering mass of British unemployed. From the Parliamentary point of view that sort of thing is subsidiary. Its party leaders will engage at once in the primary business of party leaders, which is, of course, to secure the sweets of office as speedily and securely as possible.

The broad lines of the game to be played this year are now fairly evident. They raise a number of profoundly interesting questions. The Conservative Party is the strongest of the three, but the Government it supports can be and will be turned out of office by a vote of “no confidence,” in which the Liberals, the smallest party of all, will support the Labour motion. The King will then send for Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, the leader of the Opposition, and ask him to form a Government. This Mr. MacDonald says he intends to do. He will have the qualified support of the Liberal Party. Almost immediately the Labour Party will have to produce its Budget.

The prophets foretell two alternatives. The Labour Government will produce a weak, individualistic Budget, an apologetic, compromising, imitative affair; it will drop or reserve almost all its Socialistic ideas, and it will be permitted to continue in office under the distinguished patronage—gracefully and frequently reiterated—of Mr. Asquith, so long as its good behaviour continues. Everyone will praise Mr. Ramsay MacDonald’s statesmanlike moderation, and when at last the Party has to face the constituencies——But it will have no face left for the constituencies. A mass of votes will drift back to Liberalism, which by that time will be seen to be just as good as Labour or better, and the crowd of unemployed, the poor, the disinherited, and all who are really weary and angry with the exploits and adventures of the untrammelled rich, will turn their faces away from the Labour Party and Parliamentary methods towards revolution. But the Liberal politicians will take little heed of the latter drift because it is outside the scope of Parliamentary procedure.

Or secondly, the prophets think that Labour may produce very bold and far-reaching Socialist proposals. They may stick to the Capital Levy, and so forth. They may put up their entire election programme. Then the Liberal Party will withdraw its support. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald will be obliged to resign, and the clever little, brave little Liberal group will form a Government, and with the assistance of a large part of the Conservatives carry on and—with large benevolent gestures—“save the country” by doing nothing. So that on the second alternative also the Liberal Party stands to win.

But then Mr. Ramsay MacDonald may advise the King to dissolve Parliament; he may ask the country to decide upon his Budget and

legislative programme. And here comes the most delicate issue of all. The Liberal prophets tell us the King will refuse a dissolution. Will he in fact refuse to follow the advice of his Ministers, and become active instead of passive in party affairs? When Mr. Baldwin asked for a dissolution the King protested and granted it. Will he behave differently towards Mr. MacDonald? The Liberal prophets have most attractive arguments to show that such a course is constitutional. No doubt it is. Mr. Baldwin had a majority; Mr. MacDonald has not. Nevertheless, would such a refusal, from the point of view of the Court, be a wise thing? The common man in the country is not going to see the thing from the lawyer's standpoint. He is going to conclude that the King favours the Conservatives and Liberals against Labour. From the point of view of the monarchy that is a very undesirable conclusion, even if it is an unjust conclusion, to spread about the country in a period of unemployment and social stress.

It is a polite convention in Great Britain that there is no Republican feeling in the land. That convention is not in accordance with the facts. There is much dormant Republicanism, but so long as the monarchy remains "the golden link of empire," so long as the conditions of a "crowned republic" are observed, Republicanism sleeps. But it sleeps much more lightly than many people suppose, and the crown cannot afford to make mistakes.

When the other day the Duke of York allowed himself to be associated with what appears to be a British imitation of the Ku Klux Klan, the sleeping spirit stirred. It raised an eyebrow, even if it did not open an eye. It may prove a great misfortune for the British crown if presently it is led by the assurances of eager Liberals into even the appearance of hostility to the party of the workers. The now latent Republicanism of the British people, once roused to activity, may be very difficult to lull again. The Labour Party may become a Republican party. And since the British crown is manifestly wary and discreet, I am not so certain as the Liberal lawyers that that dissolution will be refused. I may be wrong, and so among other possibilities we may see a "safety" Liberal Government sitting on the safety-valve in Britain for some years.

But do these alternatives exhaust the possibilities of the case? Suppose the coming Labour Government neither abandons nor

carries out its Capital Levy, but refers it to a delaying committee of inquiry, and suppose it goes on in grim earnest to realise all of the fine promises of the Liberal programme. Where will the Liberals be then? Suppose, pending the decision of the committee upon the Capital Levy, it piles up the super-tax on large incomes, puts an almost confiscatory tax upon underdeveloped land and mineral resources, abolishes the game laws and rids England of the fox, cuts expenditure upon armaments and military and naval display ruthlessly—puts, for example, the Guards into reasonable and comfortable inexpensive uniforms—replaces doles by public employment, organises agricultural marketing, produces a comprehensive housing scheme, and quadruples the estimate for education and scientific research; what are the Liberals going to say to it?

I know what the dinner parties will say about it, but the Liberal Party, if it is to go on existing, must save its face with the country. Perhaps a third of the Liberal Party might be genuinely disposed to back such a Labour programme; another third might feel constrained to do so. Mr. Lloyd George would move leftward, quite helpfully. And the Labour Government might struggle along insecurely and valiantly for much longer than most of the prophets suppose.

And the party managers, of all three parties, will be scheming some new electoral law before the next election. None of them will hear of honest proportional representation with large constituencies and a smaller, more efficient House of Commons; but they will all be planning something that will look fair and honest, leave the party system intact, and advantage the Parliamentary party to which each belongs. In this matter the Labour Party is no more honest than any other. Its party organs discuss the question entirely from the party point of view, and are quite disposed to consider “the alternative vote” or any other shabby evasion of proper electoral methods. So that at the end of our vista we must reckon with an election faked perhaps in some novel way but just as absurd as the last one.

And so Great Britain muddles through the years of destiny.

XVIII

Modern government: parliament and real electoral reform

22.1.24

We are assured that a reform of the electoral system is now imminent in Great Britain. The oldest and most respectable of the world's democratic governments is declared to be in need of repair and reconstruction. It has produced three parties without a majority, and it threatens to jam. Immediate legislation is promised. This must needs be a matter of lively interest to every intelligent person from China to Peru.

For the British Parliament is the Mother of Parliaments. This is the proud boast of the conventional teacher of British history (as distinguished from history), and—subject to a footnote by Mr. Belloc—it is reasonably true. The prevalent type of governing body in the world has been constructed more or less in imitation or as a variation of the respected British pattern; there is an Upper House whose members are supposed to be more select and genteel and important, and a Lower House which, generally speaking, wrangles more, is more representative of and more in the spirit of the common people, has taxing power, and is more conspicuously and fussily elected by the general population. The reasons commonly alleged

for this double chamber system are pedantic and ridiculous, but the States that have been organised or modernised in the past three centuries have followed one another in the matter with all that unquestioning readiness which distinguishes man and the sheep and the processional caterpillar from most other of God's animated creatures.

The members of one or both of these chambers or houses are elected, and the system of election remains so primitive and stupid as to leave a large minority, or even a majority, of the electors not even represented in the House. The procedure is infantile—in the British Parliament the members vote by sprinting past a teller and through a lobby and along passages and so forth back to their seats—and generally these Parliaments, Congresses, and Legislative Chambers are about as well fitted to serve the needs of our complicated modern communities as a battleship of Queen Elizabeth's navy is fitted to encounter modern artillery.

But they are difficult to scrap and reconstruct because the only people legally capable of scrapping and reconstructing them are the politicians they have created, and who are completely adapted to their necessities. You cannot expect "Old Parliamentary Hands" and such-like gentry to modify or even to realise the disastrous inefficiency of the political devices by which they live and move and have their being. Most of the Latin communities, which are logical to the pitch of violence, have solved the problem of Parliamentary incompetence in their hasty way by accepting dictators who treat all elected representatives with a scarcely veiled contempt; and even the English, in the face of a supreme national crisis, acquiesced in Cromwell....

Of course, after I have written that last sentence nothing will prevent the world-wide society of the muddle-headed from running away with the idea that I advocate dictatorships, just as it was impossible to prevent them from declaring that I had "embraced Protection" after I had pointed out that tariffs, like war, follow naturally upon nationalism, and just as they would certainly have it that I want to promote typhoid fever if I were to write about the necessary consequences of insanitary conditions. But that is a digression. Dictatorships are evil consequences of democratic break-

downs. They are the rough remedy for intolerable democracy. And except in the United States democracies are becoming very generally intolerable. The people of the United States, for the time the spoilt children of the human race, are so fortunate in their isolation and their vast unity that the efficiency of their Government is a matter of no immediate concern to them. They will perhaps get along with their unwieldy Congress and their dear two historical parties for a long time yet. The British behind their silver streak had something of the same immunity before the war. They were still in a phase of financial and economic good luck. It is over for them now. In Britain politics have become serious and vital, and under existing conditions the overstrained and impoverished community can no longer suffer the elaborate fooleries of party government.

Great Britain is in urgent need of competent representative government, and the extent to which the Mother of Parliaments proves herself to be a recuperative phœnix or an incurable old goose in this affair is a matter of vital importance not only to the British Empire, but to the whole world.

Nowadays we have fairly clear ideas of the nature of the supreme governing body that is needed for a great and various modern State. A single body seems to be all that is required; that a nation should squint at its problems with two divergent bodies does not seem to be imperative at all—though possibly a secondary body representing function, and not locality, may be a desirable auxiliary to the supreme assembly. About that supreme assembly we are now able to stipulate certain necessary conditions. It must not be too large a body, because that means an excess of inert and undistinguished members too numerous and obscure to be properly watched, such as we find encumbering affairs at Washington and Westminster, and at the same time it must be large enough to staff all its necessary committees, and to represent the chief varieties of opinion in the country. Something between two hundred and three hundred members seems to be the proper assembly; less may be unrepresentative, and more will develop crowd mentality. And the members must be elected by the method of proportional representation, and be sent up from twenty or thirty large constituencies—largely to eliminate mere local leaders—each

constituency returning a dozen members or more. Only by this method of election can we kill that gag upon honest democracy, the party system, and replace the professional politician by a various gathering of typical and well-known men and women. Such a body would change only slowly in its character from election to election, and it would sustain a Government more real, steadfast, representative, assured and consistent than any the world has ever seen before.

Throughout the world a great and gathering body of opinion is moving steadily towards such a conception of a modern Government. And because of its present needs it is Great Britain which is likely to be for a time the battleground between modern and eighteenth-century conceptions of a legislative assembly.

It will be particularly interesting to watch the ingenuities of the politicians in the new Parliament in producing schemes that will look like electoral reform and yet leave the profession still active for mischief. They will fight desperately against large constituencies with numerous members. The one-member or two-member constituency is absolutely necessary to their party system. In such constituencies even proportional representation can be reduced to a farce. And also they will offer cheap but attractive substitutes like the second ballot and the alternative vote. And they will fake extraordinary arrangements by which the voter will vote not for an individual but for a ticket or bunch, and they will call these fakes this or that improved variety of “proportional representation.” All the political parties in Britain are at present trying to work out the probable effects of this or that fake or cheap substitute for electoral honesty, upon the party prospects. In this matter the Labour Party is as bad as any other party—or worse. The discussion of electoral legislation in the Imperial Parliament throughout the next session, though it may make the angels weep, is certain to afford much entertainment to every mundane observer of human disingenuousness.

XIX

Scrapping the gold standard

19.1.24

Among recent events of conspicuous importance is the publication of a new book by Mr. J. M. Keynes, *A Tract on Monetary Reform*. Among the large trivial happenings of the time, revolutions, movements of crowned heads in and out of exile, new French alliances, and the antics of eminent politicians, it is refreshing to have something of real significance on which to make one's weekly comments.

I incurred great odium a little while ago by saying that Mr. J. M. Keynes could claim to have achieved success while at the same time I excluded those popular heroes, Napoleon I and Mr. Lloyd George, from the list of true successes. But here is a fresh book from Mr. Keynes, simple, outspoken, well written, and making a definite step forward in our understanding of the world's problems. You might read all the speeches and orations of Napoleon or Mr. Lloyd George through and you will know no more about men and things than when you began; Mr. Keynes will leave you different—enlightened. Mr. Keynes thinks with scientific lucidity and says what he thinks exactly and skilfully. What he says stands and will necessarily affect the

history of money in a real and permanent way. Did Napoleon ever say anything or has Mr. Lloyd George ever said anything except what seemed likely to impress or humbug people in general?

It is a peculiarity of the mind of Mr. Keynes that it is at once penetrating and limited. He seems to think that the British Empire is a permanent instead of a manifestly transitory arrangement and that the United States of America and the Empire and the various States of the European patchwork are always going to retain their sovereign independence in financial and economic affairs. He assumes this much, and never questions it. But within the limits of this assumption, he writes with a lucidity and a frankness that are a liberal education for the reader.

To write of currency is generally recognised as an objectionable, and indeed almost as an indecent, practice. Editors will implore a writer almost tearfully not to write about money. This is not because it is an uninteresting subject, but because it is, and always has been, a profoundly disturbing subject. The whole modern world has been brought up on cash and on credit reckoned in terms of money. Four or five generations of us have lived by the faith that a dollar was a dollar and a pound a pound, and that if you left them about they grew at so much per cent. per annum, and also increased in value. Most things became cheaper and cheaper throughout our young lives. That cheapening seemed in the nature of things. We worked for money; we saved the stuff, we looked forward to a comfortable old age. Now we live in a phase of fluctuating and on the whole mounting prices. Whosoever saveth his money shall lose it. Even the dollar buys two things where ten years ago it bought three. The pound sterling is in a worse case, and many of the other currencies have sunken to levels beyond the wildest fantasies of 1913.

Now this, as Mr. Keynes points out, is a breach of the understanding between society and the common individual. In this system in which we and our predecessors have lived for a century and more, the system which Socialists will call the “Capitalist” system but which Mr. Keynes much more properly calls the “Private Capitalist” system, there has always been an implicit guarantee that the money we worked for and saved up and lent and invested in various ways was *good*. It was good for our needs whenever we

chose to spend it again. This was the incentive to work; this was the driving force of the whole hundred years of industrial production from Waterloo to the Marne. And to a large extent the incentive has gone. Money is no longer good; it has become treacherous. Unless it can be restored this system of ours must break down and lead either to social chaos and human decadence or to a new and different system.

Now Mr. Keynes is not a Socialist. He believes that the existing system of individual competition is "in accordance with human nature and has great advantages." But it cannot go on unless money is made trustworthy again. And his proposals to restore our confidence in money are very bold and remarkable indeed.

The vice, the almost incurable vice, of cash and credit systems, since first the methods of money became dominant in the Roman Republic, has been its tendency to expand debt to impossible dimensions. Every country at the end of the war found itself owing preposterous sums to the creditor class or to foreign countries, and forced in various measure to tax the productive classes, to tax its creditor class either directly by income-tax and capital levy, or indirectly by currency inflation, and to bilk its foreign creditors. Every sovereign State in Europe had its own policy and set about the business on its own lines, with the result that to-day Europe is a museum of methods of economic collapse, from Britain, crushed by taxation and unemployment in an attempt to deflate back to the gold standard, to Germany, smashed into complete economic paralysis by extreme currency inflation. No country remains now with its currency based on a gold standard, not even the United States of America. True, you can exchange dollar bills for gold at Washington, but then you lose by the transaction. The United States has over-bought gold and is still accumulating and hoarding gold—at a loss. If all America's hoarded gold were minted and circulated, the value of the dollar would fall. The American dollar is the extreme case of deflation, as the exploded German mark was the extreme case of inflation.

Now what Mr. Keynes wants the world to do is to scrap gold altogether as a monetary standard and to substitute a "managed" currency. For the present he would have two independent units in

the world, the dollar and the pound, because he is sceptical of the Americans and British ever working together without friction—even in so vitally important a matter. In both the United States and Britain he would have the banks and Treasury co-operating to keep in circulation such an amount of currency as would maintain internal prices at a steady level. They would decrease currency if prices fell, and increase it if they rose. He would take the price of a "standard, composite commodity"—so much steel, so much wheat, so much rice, so much rubber, and so on—and he would make that the new standard of value. He believes that the other currencies in the world would finally steady down into fairly stable relations with the "managed" dollar and the "managed" pound. And then we would go on again with our "Private Capitalism," buying, selling, saving, investing, competing, as we did in the happy days before the war.

But there are certain curious implications in this. Mr. Keynes seems to recognise them and yet not give them their full value. The underlying assumption of Private Capitalism is that human beings will work better for gain, will show more enterprise and industry for profit, than for any other motive. But here, at the heart of the system, Mr. Keynes proposes to establish a disinterested group of managers, bankers, and officials who are not to accumulate private fortunes, though they could do so very easily by playing with the fluctuations of prices, but with a single-hearted devotion are just to maintain them for the public good. He seems to realise the difficulty here. He insists at several points that a system of Private Capitalism cannot survive without moderation; that if private enterprise will insist upon gambling upon the exchanges and working for profits regardless of any other consideration, the whole system must collapse. But if we are to rely upon the spirit of service and not upon the incentive of gain in our banks and Treasury officials, why should we not rely upon it generally? If currency can be "managed" in the public interest by men working, not for profit, but for service, why not also the production of staples and land and sea transport? But a system of economics run on the motive of service is not individualism at all; it is Socialism.

I think that in the long run Mr. Keynes will be forced to realise this. A "managed" currency is a long step towards a deliberately

organised world. The gold standard was the standard of individual enterprise and go-as-you-please. The gold standard has failed and passes. Unless human society is to fail also, the age of scientific management is close at hand.

XX

The hub of Europe: Czecho-Slovakia and France

26.1.24

Bohemia within its mountains is like a square citadel in the very centre of Europe. Czecho-Slovakia, the old Bohemian kingdom revived and extended, is the most orderly and successful of all the States created by the Treaty of Versailles. The republic understands the modern need of advertisement; the wandering writer finds a flattering welcome there, and what is done in Prague is heard of in the world.

The new treaty with France brings Czecho-Slovakia still more prominently forward. Poor exhausted bankrupt Poland, that sucked orange, is thrust aside, and Czecho-Slovakia becomes the keystone of France's restless incessant rearrangement of alliances. But Czecho-Slovakia is a very different country from Poland; it is sturdier and less romantically inclined, its President and chief Minister are among the most level-headed and far-seeing of European statesmen; and it is likely to prove a sobering and restraining influence upon French activities. Bohemia is the projecting westward angle of the Slav world; its language is closely akin to Russian,

Serbian, Polish and Bulgarian; within its boundaries there are more than three million Germans, and three-quarters of a million of Magyars, and its natural destiny seems to be that it should act as a region of exchange and interpretation between the Slavic world, Hungary and Turkey, and the world of Central and Western Europe. German speech encloses it upon three sides. In itself, with its thirteen million odd of heterogeneous population, largely engaged in agriculture, it cannot be a country of any great importance; its importance now, as in the past, lies in its position and its possible inter-racial functions.

To these the President and his chief Minister and pupil, Mr. Benes, are acutely alive. They see in their country a meeting-place and reconciler of European interests. They are ambitious to make it a centre of trade, of intellectual interchange, and political unification. For this end they have worked steadfastly since their country emerged into renewed political existence in 1918. Theirs is a splendid and civilised dream.

It has been stated in many quarters that this new alliance has been made hastily, and at the initiative of France, as a stepping-stone to an understanding with Russia. The possibility of a Labour Government in Great Britain, and of a complete British recognition of Russia, is supposed to have driven France into a hasty search for an intermediary who would help her to end her long feud with the Bolsheviks. But in reality the recent visit of President Masaryk to Paris and London was already arranged last summer. He was already discussing the problems of this understanding then. It is probably a Czech rather than a French initiative that has brought it about.

There is something very attractive in these steadfast schemes to make Bohemia the centre of a Europe renewed. I think everyone who hopes to see a more noble and spacious civilisation emerging from the distresses of the present time must feel warmly sympathetic with these great ambitions. But it is impossible to ignore the enormous disadvantages against which the imaginations of President Masaryk and Mr. Benes and their colleagues are pitted. They make their creative effort in a tangle of long-accumulated difficulties and with some extraordinarily intractable material.

One first difficulty lies in the fact that the European railway system was developed while Prague was merely a provincial capital. The railways of Central Europe radiate from Vienna and Berlin. The centres of banking and commercial exchange were in these cities. And the efforts of Prague to deflect the currents of trade and finance to herself have hitherto fallen far short of the political ambitions of her leaders. I remember my astonishment on my first journey from Eger to Prague in 1920 to discover that I was travelling to the capital on a single line of railway.

In Prague at that time the great Sokol festival was going on, the festival of the patriotic societies, and there was little thought of Europe apparent and much of the three united peoples of Bohemia, Moravia, and Slovakia. National costumes made the streets gay; national music filled the air. But there was a great welcome at that time for the foreign visitor, and the bunting of all the Allies interwove with the national flag. French horizon-blue and the Stars and Stripes came into the picture with the chain and robes of the Lord Mayor of London, who was there in full regalia. And when one was in the presence of President Masaryk, with his sweeping views and his amazing knowledge of the contemporary intellectual activities of the English and French and German and Russian speaking worlds, the nationalist enthusiasm of Prague seemed no more than a picturesque and necessary background clamour.

But I was there again this last summer, and the foreign flags and visitors had gone, and I realised more fully the sturdy and obstinate patriotism of the Bohemian people. I saw Prague not on show for the foreigner, but in its everyday clothes. And the effect was extremely provincial. My impression was that the friction between the German Bohemians—an absolutely necessary element—and the Czechs had increased. That may be the fault of the recalcitrant Germans; I will not venture to adjudicate on the rights and wrongs of that issue. The point is that that bad feeling has not been allayed. There was a more pronounced objection to the German language. Hitherto the Czechs have been a bilingual people, and it was in the double possession of a Teutonic and Slav language and culture that one of our chief hopes for their future lay. But they seem to be dropping German and learning no other language in its place. They are sinking back into a

churlish monolingualism. The public notices of the town of Prague are in Czech, and in Czech only. For the westerner Czech is as difficult as Russian. Indeed, so far as he is concerned, they might as well be in Chinese. This is patriotic barbarism. How can Prague expect either pleasure visitors or business men to come to her if she will not speak to them in any intelligible tongue? How can she become a mart or meeting-place of the nations if she insists that no other speech than her own shall be used in her streets? In a little while all the currents of Central European life will be flowing back again to their former centres in polyglot Vienna and Berlin.

Now these excesses of Czech patriotism make President Masaryk, to my mind, a very tragic figure. For this amazing man, this learned professor who was a village blacksmith's son, did more than anyone to revive the self-respect and national feeling of the Czechs. He restored the Czech nation. He believed, and still believes, that he restored a necessary and decisive councillor to the European board. It may be that he has done no more than produce a tough, rustic dwarf. The fine patriotism he evoked has been vulgarised and cheapened, and about him and behind him and Mr. Benes presses a loud and irreconcilable body of ultra-patriots. His Germans have been foolish and tiresome; egged on by the Austrian landowners, who are furious because of the Capital Levy and a liberal land policy, they will do nothing but rehearse grievances. In such German places as Marienbad you see them retaliating the insults of Prague by boycotting Czech. Yet a generous understanding between Czech and German is essential to any future beyond obscurity for Bohemia. A Czecho-Slovakia, pure Czech, with perhaps for political purposes a smattering of French, will be following in the way of Poland towards a vexed and vexatious insignificance in European affairs.

XXI

The mandarins at the gate: the revival of the old learning

2.2.24

It would be near the truth of things to say that the only events of permanent importance in human affairs are educational events. Except in so far as they demonstrate and teach or interrupt teaching, wars and treaties, kings and laws, and all the standard material of history are but the by-products of the educator's work. Some day, when we have escaped from the trumpery dignity of classical history, a new Gibbon will trace for us the failure in understanding and co-operation that made the Roman Empire no more than a staggering pretension and left Europe and Western Asia a festering cluster of nationalisms to this day. No conqueror can make the multitude different from what it is, no statesman can carry the world's affairs beyond the ideas and capacity of the generation of adults with which he deals, but the teachers—I use the word in the widest sense—can do more than either conqueror or statesman; they can create a new vision and liberate latent powers in our kind. Or, if the perversity of their possibilities hold them, they can continue to put out the eyes of

the children of men and let the world go on still under blind leaders of the blind.

At no time in the world's experience has the need for a creative education been so manifest as it is to-day. This social and political system in which we live is ailing and divided against itself, failing to reconstitute even as much economic universalism as prevailed before the great war, involving itself in a hopeless muddle of debts. It is a system plainly doomed to a further series of wider and profounder disasters, unless amidst its distresses it can evolve a clearer realisation, not only in its ruling classes but generally, of the origins of our race and our civilisation, of the conditions under which our communities have grown, of the vital inter-relationships of our social order, and of the tremendous perils and the immense possibilities before mankind. A population with such a breadth of outlook, a population disciplined to creative constructive work, is not simply desirable to-day; it is imperatively demanded if civilisation is to avert a decay and a collapse as much greater than the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire as a modern liner is greater than an Alexandrian galley.

It is because of his realisation of the paramount need of a great educational effort as the first and supreme thing in human affairs to-day that every intelligent man must needs note with something between dismay and bitter derision the recent signs of a revival of "classical" teaching in the schools and colleges of the Atlantic peoples. The French, who so love the eighteenth century that in foreign and domestic policy they are always trying to get back to it, have led the way. Disturbing modern subjects which tend to betray the facts that the Mediterranean Sea is not the whole world, and that most great events of present importance to mankind occurred before or outside of or in revolt against the Latin civilisation, are to be kept out of the purview of French adolescence. More Greek will be taught, but not enough of it and not well enough for the young Frenchman to realise how feeble was the political, social, and economic reaction of Greece upon Rome. He will be trained to think that there was some sort of magnificent succession between the two, whereas Rome got little from Greece except slave pedagogues and pedants, misleading literary models which crippled her own sturdier initiative, articles de

luxe, living and dead, architects, sculptors and painters, and cared so little for the clarifying Aristotle that she left his books about and lost them.

The French, so largely German in race and mental quality, must however cherish their own Latin illusion in their own fashion; it comes nearer home to an English writer when he finds President Coolidge blessing the classical side. And still more dismaying is the truculent behaviour of the British Classical Association which has recently been meeting in the congenial atmosphere of Westminster School. Mr. Costley-White, the Headmaster, boasted of the increasing number of unfortunates in his school who were taking up the classical course, and made it clear that even those who were supposed to have a modern course in his school were really not given an honest modern course at all, but wasted their time with elementary classics before they were contemptuously “specialised” in science, modern history, mathematics, or modern languages. (What a classification!) And Mr. Herbert Fisher told coyly how even in a Coalition Government fragments of the Greek Anthology were not unfrequently translated into English verse during the duller Cabinet discussions—on contemporary education, one presumes. He further pointed out the power every headmaster had to direct the studies in his school, and in plain words to steal people’s sons for the classics. It is clear that the classical headmasters of Great Britain, in a mood of self-complacent obstinacy, will spare no efforts to pith as many young intelligences as possible with their antiquated, deadening and antisocial disciplines. The classical tradition is still strongly entrenched in the educational world of the English-speaking peoples, and both in America and in the British Empire it will be over its dead body only that a modern education will be able to reach the finer minds of the new generation.

Now it is a useless and dangerous civility to write flattering things about the classical education that still cripples the selected best of our youth. It robs us of a directive class of lively intelligences; it is the root cause of the pretentious sterility of contemporary statescraft. The uncritical cant it sustains about the peerless beauty of Greek art and Greek character, and the massive wisdom and integrity of Roman law and administration, has been and still is a blight upon the

creative impulses of modern life. In schools and in colleges it is, and, considering the sort of man who will generally have to impart it, it must always be, a deadening grammatical grind. It consumes the scanty time of our youth, it eats up the time-table, so that any effectual broadening study of other things cannot co-exist with it. It presents the history of mankind grotesquely out of perspective; it saturates its victims with a pro-Hellenic, pro-Latin partisanship that perverts their judgment of all historical processes. Its material being languages and—in a lesser degree—literature, dead, pickled, and without any power of growth or fresh combination, it is, before anything else, a training in stereotyped expression and stereotyped forms of thought. At the present time, in the face of the world's present needs, it is impossible to regard a school or college presided over by a classical scholar and devoted to the classical tradition as anything but a dead and death-diffusing spot in our educational system. This new offensive against the proper education of our children, to which the British Classical Association gives such definite expression, is a thing essentially evil, a thing which any servant of creative civilisation must fight at any cost. We cannot afford to sacrifice our convictions to politeness and pretend that we think the classically trained mind anything better than a warped and restricted and mischievously infectious mind.

We need a world-wide common education of which the history of life and the sciences of life and matter are the two main divisions, in which drawing, mathematics, and living languages are studied as tools and methods of expression and not as subjects in themselves, and in which music is properly utilised in the development of æsthetic perception. In such a modern education the dead languages and literature can play only a subordinate and illustrative and properly proportioned part.

XXII

Lenin: private capitalism against communism

9.2.24

So Lenin is dead at last. He dies on the eve of the recognition of the Soviet Government by the Western Powers. For most practical purposes the work of Lenin was over before 1920. His death now or a little later will make only the smallest difference in the destinies of Russia.

For the Communist Party which still controls Russia has this in common with the Catholic Church, that it is sustained by a system of dogmas, disciplines and, now, experiences and traditions so much stronger than any single individual, that individuals, though they may serve it more or less effectively, cannot control nor deflect it. They must move inside its limitations. Russia, under the Communist rule, is at the opposite pole to such a phase of affairs as would evoke a Cæsarism. It is over the Western Latin democracies, subjected to the adventures and ravages of uncontrolled rich men, that the dictators arise. Lenin was never in reality a dictator as Mussolini is a dictator. He impressed one as being in the grip of forces quite beyond his control, albeit they are forces he had himself helped to

develop and organise. Communism is definite, directive, compelling; Fascism is dramatic and empty, a puerile, vague, violent thing, a young ass to be ridden anywhere by a bold, competent rider. A score of Lenins might die and Communism would go on as though nothing had changed. Without Mussolini the Fascisti might do anything—fall into a torrent, get lost, destroy society, vanish.

I saw Lenin in 1920 in the Kremlin. He was an extraordinarily fragile little thing, small hands clasped together upon the corner of his desk and little feet that dangled from his chair far off the ground. He was very bald. I learn now with astonishment that I was the older man. He put his amusing Mongoloid face a little on one side as we talked, with something of the wary expression of a fencer. When he found out I didn't want to score points for or against Communism, but to learn what they proposed to do next and particularly what they proposed to do about the peasants, he dropped any appearance of controversy and laid his views and plans before me very frankly.

In return I tried to tell him things about England, but he seemed to have been stuffed up with a lot of nonsense about British conditions. He believed that a certain obscure paper called the *Dreadnought*, or the *Woman's Dreadnought*, or some such title, edited by Miss Sylvia Pankhurst, represented millions of insurgent British proletarians, and that the violent struggle then going on in Ireland was, in some slightly obscured form, a struggle between Capitalism and Communism. It was difficult to readjust his perspectives.

His schemes for the reorganisation of Russia seemed to me to be right-minded, honestly conceived, and very, very artless. He had a scheme for the "Electrification of Russia" that struck my usually quite sufficiently imaginative mind as hopelessly impractical. It ignored distances, and Russia is a country consisting mostly of distances.

I suppose no gambler who stakes his all upon a single throw against great odds and wins was ever so astonished as the Bolsheviks when they came into power in 1917. They went into Russia like good revolutionists to make trouble and die. They found themselves presently in scarcely disputed possession of a completely exhausted country. Even in 1920 they seemed still a little incredulous to find themselves still there. Never was there such rant and nonsense as the stuff Mr. Winston Churchill, for example, talks

about the Bolsheviks seizing upon and ruining Russia. So far from seizing, there was nothing to oppose them but brigands and hopelessly incapable military adventurers, and so far from ruining, the ruin was already complete. In this chaos the Bolsheviks grasped power, according to all the accepted revolutionary examples. There was not so much an organised resistance to their seizure as a lawless disregard. They had to shoot. All revolutionists have to shoot. It is their privilege and their danger. But it is usually conceded that the Bolsheviks shot too much and went on shooting too long, and acquired almost a habit of shooting.

It is not that they were bloodthirsty men, but that they were inexperienced and unprepared. They murdered in a fit of Russian nerves. And they were equally inexperienced and unprepared for the task of government, once their power was secure. They served Russia well in defending her from France, Poland, Churchill, Kolchak, Judenitch, Deniken, Wrangel, and all the evil horde that beset her from without, but they rebuilt within slowly and experimentally and wastefully. And they had the bad luck of two famine years.

Still, they are on their feet now; they are making headway, and it is from the red root of Communist theory that the new Russian order will grow. It is manifestly destined to be a very great system, a United States in the Old World, stretching from the Baltic to the Pacific.

It is very important to grasp the fact that the former Russian political and social order was bankrupt and collapsed of its own accord, because it is the lesson that the private adventurers of the West are most loath to learn. Communism is not a dragon that devours healthy States; it is rather the scavenger of the rotten and fallen. You cannot say, for example, that Communism is either very strong nor spreading very rapidly as an aggressive doctrine in Europe. And yet it may still come to prevail over great parts of Europe. Europe is sick and obstinately set against its own cure; the decay of its monetary system (without which, as Mr. Keynes has pointed out, private capitalism is a totally unworkable system) spreads, and the European community, saturated with ideas of eager private gain, destitute of a sufficiently strong sense of the collective good, and enslaved by narrow individualistic and partisan and

patriotic obsessions, makes no effort sufficiently comprehensive and intelligent to arrest the decay. The European system is not being seriously attacked from without at the present time, and least of all by Communism; the whole Communist propaganda in Western Europe does not amount to much more than the advertisement organisation of a typewriter seller or a patent medicine vendor. But the European system is being attacked from within by its own speculators and profit-makers, its tariffs and its combines for the restraint and deflection of trade. It has taught all its children competitive self-seeking, and it crumbles and collapses now for the lack of creative effort.

I am not one of those who minimise and detract from the great achievements of the nineteenth century, and deep in my nature is a craving for irresponsible liberty. Temperamentally I dislike Communism. I am a collectivist but not a Communist. I have always clung and still cling to the belief that the sprawling social and economic life in which I have grown up might be progressively organised into a secure, generous, and scientific system without any abrupt and violent destructive change. But I must confess to a deepening and increasing doubt whether the present European system can right itself. The collapse continues so steadily and disconcertingly. The little nations sit within their boundaries scheming for small advantages, none heeding the general good. Germany follows Russia; her enemies without and her “big-business” fools within have prepared another great area in which the Communist may make his experiments. And the collapse shows no tendency to end at the Rhine. The Western exchanges totter.

It may be that the hopes of such as I are excessive, that tinkering cannot save the European system now, that it is destined to profounder and more drastic changes than we are willing to admit as necessary. Perhaps the root is too rotten with self-seeking. Perhaps the Communist, with all his faults, his wastefulness and ugliness of method, has something vital to teach the world, if it is no more than discipline and devoted subordination to large ideas. Perhaps the whole European system, like Russia, may after all need to be regrafted upon this new strange root of Communism before it enters

upon a fresh creative phase. I do not know. But it is plain to me that the years pass and the recovery of Europe does not begin.

XXIII

The fantasies of Mr. Belloc and the future of the world

16.2.24

Mr. Belloc has written a small imposing book about America and England, called *The Contrast*. Small it is in length and substance, but imposing in its English edition at least by reason of large print, vast margins, thick paper, and all that makes a book physically impressive. It is the sort of book that has the first sentence of Chapter I on page nine. To the student of current events it is a very noteworthy book indeed. It betrays the drift of a very complex group of forces at work in our educational, journalistic, and literary world, a group of forces desiring the separation of America from Europe, clamouring for the disengagement of America from participation in the development of a new phase of civilisation, and the arrest of that development.

Mr. Belloc is too often treated by American and English critics as a merely comic figure. Comic figure no doubt this bulky, gesticulating Frenchman is, with his pretensions to an enormous bibulousness, with his affectation of a fastidious but non-existent scholarship, with the immense emphasis of his wild impromptu classifications and his

magnificent caricature of a victorious dialectic. His prose style becomes more and more wonderfully suggestive of the after-dinner talker at his richest and jolliest. The sudden lapses into intense whispering italics; the abrupt glorification of some phrase by the thick loud enunciation of unexpected capitals! He is quick to imitate any form of dignity, even the dignity of the scientific exponent at his solemnest. Could anything be more sublimely funny, for instance, than this pseudo-illuminating experiment to illustrate the profound truth (in italics) that "*intense individual contact and energy make for uniformity*"?

"Put a number of smooth, round balls upon a billiard table. Give them each a slow and slight movement, and you will see no general movement appearing. There will be little clatter, few and rare collisions. Impart to them each a very rapid motion, that is, an individual intensity, and while you raise very greatly the noise of the shocks (which is a superficial phenomenon), and while you increase even more the number and frequency of collisions (which is the cause of the noise), you also soon develop a resultant of all the directions. If the sharp speed of each be maintained you will soon perceive in the movement of the whole a general swing, and all that great mass of balls will be moving in a crowd. So it is with a human society."

One likes to think of that rosy dinner party adjourned to the billiard-room and "poon thesh soshial lawsh to pra'l tes'" by imparting the motion as directed.

But apart from the almost wilfully preposterous side of Mr. Belloc there is much to interest us in him profoundly. He is vigorously expressive; he speaks for forces in our community that are more often silently active; he gives resistances animation. The least original of contemporary writers, he has retained the leading ideas of an upbringing that was essentially Catholic and Latin in a practically inflexible form. His world, after a few merely preparatory phases and with a polite gesture to the Greeks, begins and ends with Rome. His mind in this age of tumultuous growth is like a naughty and growing child refusing to be put into larger clothes. And yet he is not blind to the great volume of reality outside that narrow old-fashioned scheme of his. He is not a blind man; he has at once vision and an extreme

obstinacy. He feels and denies the passing of mediaeval Europe, he struggles against his realisation of the coming of a new order in the world, which shall comprehend, for example, Siberia and China and America, and a world-wide culture into which Islam and Christendom, the wisdom of India and China and the science of Britain and Germany and America and France and North Italy and Russia and Japan shall alike fall and be fused. One probable factor in this synthesis will be the English language, the great political and scientific traditions it carries with it, and the band of English-speaking communities, still growing and still crude, which will bring those traditions into fruitful relationships with a thousand new conditions and a thousand new climatic conditions. Rome will have a scarcely more important place in an English-knitted world than Babylon.

And so Mr. Belloc beats himself against the growing strength of this great net of civilised understandings. It does not exist. The languages diverge. The Americans are more foreign to the British than any Western Europeans. The British are a slightly detached part of some general Western European culture. A Frenchman can understand Keats and an American cannot. Americans are "egalitarian" and the British profoundly aristocratic. The decay of British aristocracy is the end of Britain, but there is always France to fall back upon. The American military mind is French in spirit. A Bellocian storm of such assertions swirls through the entire book, aggressive in manner, self-protective in motive. He emerges where he began. The Americans do not belong to "our" system—"*our*" meaning the intimate close brotherhood of British and French and Italians and Spanish and so forth, the British rather marginal to the Latin Catholic world. The Americans are a "New Thing"—capitals; they are a new culture outside the Western European culture. They are a "new race." They must follow their own destinies and "we" ours.

Mr. Belloc is writing for American as much as for English readers, and he shows a care for their susceptibilities. But one or two possibilities gleam through, possibilities of a reassuring sort for his dear old Western European world. There may be biological forces at work; "a new race, the fate of which, to survive or to die, we know

not.” Or this great new world may presently fall into social disorder, division—and insignificance.

This is the essence of Mr. Belloc’s argument to estrange Americans and Europeans, and particularly the Americans and British. Is it sound? So far as the differences go one concedes the vividness of Mr. Belloc’s vision. (His opening account of the different qualities of American and European scenery, by the way, is an amazingly good piece of writing.) But do the Americans present either a new race or even a new culture? I deny both these propositions. They are racially a still largely unfused mixture of Europeans, and the novel features of their social and cultural life merely mark a new phase into which the British and the European and the Slav cultures are all following America. That is to say, I do not believe that America is diverging upon a line of her own, but is simply ahead along a path that the other great constituents of the coming world community must all presently follow.

Let us state the case briefly and simply. Nobody who knows anything of the facts of the case regards the citizen of the United States as a sort of transplanted Britisher; but with the exception of certain coloured millions and certain Red Indian survivals they are manifestly transplanted Europeans, whose political institutions were originally built up in reaction to the Hanoverian monarchy and as a development of and in close sympathy with European liberalism and British nonconformity. This community of transplanted Europeans had the good fortune to have no strong military neighbour, and it had an almost virgin continent into which to expand. This good fortune enabled the States to realise very swiftly the full social and political possibilities of steamboat, railway, and electric communication.

They have developed a great State on the modern scale, with an unprecedented unity and uniformity of general ideas. A little too favoured by their immunities, they have not perhaps made so good a pace as they might have done with their general elementary education, but altogether their progress has been marvellous. The congested and entangled States of Western Europe—I leave out the Russian and British systems, which are neither of them truly European—are destined to achieve an ultimate unity under the same irresistible forces of transport that have expanded and held together

the American United States. Their unification may be complicated or arrested by the unavoidable interweaving of the Slav and British systems with their destinies, and it is surely impossible for anyone outside the Belloc type of mentality to imagine either English-speaking or Latin-speaking America having neither voice nor share in the European part of this recrystallisation of the world's affairs.

In this new order of life into which our kind is passing, Roman Christendom will become a local tradition and a province, just as Sumeria was swallowed up in Babylonia and just as the Empires of Babylon and Egypt became memories and provinces in the Empire of Rome. We are not developing new races, but merely mingling those we have, and our cultures do not so much differentiate as fuse, so we may reasonably hope to have at last one creative culture, with many aspects, replacing the partial civilisations of the past.

Fate has imposed it upon Mr. Belloc that he should see these things and deny them. His lot, I think, might have been happier had he been born and settled in some rich little town in the South of France, and there sat in the café, drinking his good red wine and orating and denying, without the irritation of having seen and known. But it was decreed that he should go to America and come back to report a strange and terrible land where the mountains are not really mountains nor the rivers rivers, and where a strange race grows outside the pale.

And, an exile in modern England, he has been forced, too, to turn his eyes into the depths of the past and see how life arose and how it has come to be man and will pass beyond man. And that also he denies, with much banging of the little round drum of a table on the terrasse. The American is a phantom and geology a lie; the only true world is Latin-made Europe, and if Heaven had not created it specially for jolly men, Mr. Belloc would; and in the warmth and congenial friendliness of it, Mr. Belloc will sit fighting reality with voice and gesture until the good red wine runs out and the sun goes down upon him for the last time.

XXIV

A creative educational scheme for Britain: a tentative forecast

22.2.24

The Labour Government of Great Britain starts its career with a conservative discretion that should reassure even the most excitable inmates of the Rothermere journalistic institutions. For this year at any rate we shall get little that we might not have had from a rather left-handed Liberal Cabinet. The Social Revolution is in no hurry to arrive.

The recognition of Russia is all to the good; and the treatment of foreign politicians in office as though they were statesmen and the serious little visits and talks, are full of promise. If you treat a politician as a statesman sufficiently it is possible that he will become one. It is to be hoped that the economies upon military things will have a certain courage, and that we may see the last of costly Guards' uniforms and such-like gilt on the Royal gingerbread, this year. A democratic monarchy with a Labour Prime Minister should wear plain clothes. But these are minor matters. The immediate test of the Labour Government's quality will be its treatment of national education. There is no excuse for just carrying on. The British

educational policy since the war has been mean and deadly. The children insist upon growing up, and at present most of them for all practical purposes achieve the status of unemployed adults or undertrained blacklegs at fourteen. Secondary and higher education is a dislocated muddle.

I do not want to undervalue British education. Compared with other countries the common citizen of Britain is well educated and well informed. He is—though many Americans are loath to realise this—better educated and better informed than the average American common citizen. But compared with what is needed in a great modern State he is pitifully and dangerously under-educated. It is impossible for a Labour Government to realise its ideal of a highly organised community inspired not by profit-hunting but by the spirit of co-operative service, and working and producing abundantly for the common good, with the British population at the present level of education. To raise that level is a necessary condition to the successful extension of public service into economic life and the replacement of the money scramble by economic order.

For this reason Mr. C. P. Trevelyan is for me the most interesting and hopeful of all the new Labour Ministers. With his family tradition of high scholarship and liberal innovation, and with the new ferment of modern creative ideas in his mind, we may hope for a very bold and broad handling of the problems of British education. To him is given the opportunity of welding the disconnected parts, some quite good and some extremely inadequate or defective, which make up the British educational resources of to-day, into what may be the first completely comprehensive modern educational system in the world.

The first thing needed for the achievement of such a task is a complete and final recognition of the fact that such an education must go on at least to the age of sixteen, and that it must include a general knowledge of the history of the world and mankind, the elements of political and economic science, some knowledge of the methods and scope of biological and physical science, and a reasonable acquaintance with and use of at least one foreign language. The raising of the leaving age to sixteen was promised some years ago by Mr. Fisher, probably the feeblest statesman who has ever been overruled by his political associates. That promise

was made when Britain was to become a land fit for heroes under the eloquent gestures of Mr. Lloyd George. It is for Mr. Trevelyan now to make that promise a reality.

But it is not only upward that the school age should extend, but also downward. It should be possible for poor parents who cannot afford a nursery to send their children to the people's schools at a quite tender age. The children of prosperous people have a governess, or in towns go to some properly equipped infant school, by the time they are four or five. The children of the working-class woman knock about at home with a mother too busy to give them sufficient educational attention, and their only open air is the street. They miss the beginnings of drawing and modelling and such-like play; they do not get sufficiently talked to; they get little or no music; they start with that much handicap. Vile attempts at economy in British education have meant a grave retrogression in this respect. The schools have to be reopened to infants, and the facilities for infant teaching restored and extended. The public infant school must be the day-nursery of the poor.

Both these extensions of the school age will require more teachers. And even as it is, the British schools are scandalously understaffed. Not only is that so, but many of the existing staffs are under-trained and under-educated for their work. I cannot conceive of British education as a satisfactory system with less than quadruple the number of teachers at work than are now employed.

Moreover they have to be better teachers. When British elementary education was organised in the 'seventies of the last century it was done in the shabbiest and cheapest way possible. Those were the days when Englishwomen of the prosperous classes would become half frantic with jealousy and hate and derision at the idea of a housemaid wearing a fringe or the cook going out in pretty clothes on a Sunday. That was the spirit of the time. It was intolerable to them that the poor man's "brats" should be taught by really educated persons. The prospective teachers of the general public, therefore, were not sent through the Universities and made a part of the general comity of educated men and women. They were put apart into mean, bleak, restricted training colleges of their own, and everything was done to establish and maintain a sense of social

inferiority in their minds. They were intended to feel the superiority of the parson and the lordship of the manufacturer and the squire. Never has a profession risen to self-respect against such obstacles and disadvantages as the British elementary teachers. It is for Mr. Trevelyan to complete the expansion and liberalisation of these training colleges, to see that they get at last the staffs, libraries, laboratories, and facilities of interchange necessary to incorporate them completely in the university system of the land. Or else to hand them over to the local authorities as lunatic asylums or something of that sort or to reconstruct them to meet the housing shortage, or just simply to dynamite them and send the whole of the next generation of teachers through the Universities.

Having secured an adequate supply of soundly trained and educated teachers, and with the whole youthful population—except those attending the many excellent private preparatory schools in Britain—going up to the age of sixteen, at least, to the publicly maintained schools, it will be possible for Mr. Trevelyan to give his mind to the very urgent problem of grading schools. The organisers of elementary education in Britain, like the American fathers, seem to have thought that a school was just a school. But children under the age of twelve require very different educational surroundings from those between twelve and sixteen. The Junior school may well be a mixed village school as close to mother as possible, a small school, bright and homelike. The Second school needs to be larger, and with a various staff; children are already differentiating after twelve, there must be a choice of studies, one child's education is another child's poison. Moreover, the equipment needed at the second stage is greater and more various. Educational centres are indicated here, and the automobile to collect the youngsters comes happily into the world at this stage to enable both Britain and America to meet the demands of an advancing civilisation upon rural youth.

Over most of Britain the market towns lie at eight or ten miles apart; the roads converge upon them, they are the natural places for the Second schools. Here is a very pretty and, I should think, a very congenial task of reorganisation for Mr. Trevelyan. Like Edward VI of England, it may be his destiny to write his name upon England with a trail of new and reconstructed schools.

But an educational system that secures merely a proper education for every British boy or girl up to the age of sixteen is only the broad foundation of a complete State education. The English “Public Schools,” which are not really public at all, and which retain their boys in a state of loutish athleticism two years or more after they should be at college; the miscellany of “upper-class” girls’ schools; the Universities, that are partly continuation colleges and partly Universities for real intellectual work and interchange, much incommoded by undergraduates’ “rags,” solemn athleticism, and a pervading adolescent clamour; the antiquated and boring legal and medical professional training; and, indeed, the whole tangle of class-conscious, middle- and upper-class educational institutions in Britain, would be enormously benefited, and I hope will be benefited, by a bold—even though it were at the time an entirely unsuccessful—attempt at reorganisation upon modern lines.

Once people have been set thinking about these things they will never stop as they are. The mischief at present is that we take the most preposterous arrangements for granted because we are used to them. It will not be necessary to stir the venerable quiet, the tradition, and ripe usages of Oxford and Cambridge very greatly. Somewhere the fine traditions of classical scholarship and stylistic mathematics should be preserved, and these seem to be their appointed refuges. But there is now a constellation of other and more conveniently situated provincial Universities which are still miserably cramped and poor. For all that, several are doing quite first-class University work. And there exists now in London, in spite of neglect and misdirection, a great group of literary, artistic, scientific, and legal institutions which cry aloud to be grouped and correlated upon broad and congenial lines as the effective intellectual nucleus of the British Empire, and even perhaps of the English-speaking world. It is to the loosely co-ordinated institutions within and without the present so-called University of London that I hope Mr. Trevelyan will chiefly direct his attention as the apex of the pyramid I hope to see arising, based on the existing preparatory school, on the re-fashioned “Public School,” relieved of its too mature seniors, and on the revised and strengthened free Junior and

Second schools which should take the place of our existing elementary schools.

XXV

Portugal and prosperity: the blessedness of being a little nation

1.3.24

For several weeks just recently I was cut off from Britain and America and most of the things that interest me in the world by a postal strike in Portugal. It was an original sort of strike. The little dears went to their offices and so forth, and just did nothing until the Government kept a promise to raise salaries. Telegrams and letters coagulated in masses that are still incompletely dissolved. Some of the more humorous of the strikers mixed up the letters, and delivered considerable numbers at the wrong addresses, where many perished miserably. Meanwhile I read the Lisbon *Diario de Noticias*, which has about as much foreign news as the *West Sussex Gazette*, and meditated on Portugal. To which country I had come, by the by, because it was within three days' post of England and a most convenient cable centre.

Portugal has a climate that is always interesting and generally delightful. It has its wild phases of sea-wind and passionate rain, and

then the only thing to do here at Estoril—except work—is to go to the western headlands and see the green Atlantic waves hit the cliffs and explode into vast mountains of sunlit foam. And to get caught and drenched by a rainstorm, and so home. Or the north wind blows, and usually it is the north wind that blows, and then the air is as keen and sweet as Alpine air and the sky is blazing blue. The flowers are astonishing. There is purple iris in all the water courses; the banks are alive with periwinkle and tall spikes of antirrhinum; in the woods are endless scillas and rock roses. The other day I walked over a shrubby moorland and there I came upon a great multitude of upstanding clumps of a sort of white heather, rather big and round with the tips and shadows just tinged with pink, and everywhere among these clumps there crept a gentian-blue flower—lithospermum I think it is. And not a soul was there to appreciate this lavish loveliness except myself and another chance wanderer from the beaten track.

Wet or fine, the air of Portugal has a natural happiness in it, and the people of the country should be as happy and prosperous as any people in the world. The country has a magnificent position, and great overseas possessions. Lisbon is the natural port of Europe for South America and West Africa. The olive and the orange and such-like things can be grown here under the best conditions. The very various and great, though largely undeveloped, mineral wealth includes radioactive deposits of world-wide importance. And so forth. There is indeed all the material here for great prosperity. As a matter of fact, I have never seen a less prosperous-looking nation. Great poverty prevails throughout this land. I have never seen anywhere, not even in Russia, working people so ill-clad, so patched and ragged, so manifestly neglected and under-nourished. And there is also a vast amount of preventable disease. The women are old at thirty, bearing children to die; the men are bent at fifty. The poorer houses are hovels, and half the population is illiterate. And yet it is not a low-grade population. It is varied in type and complexion, but there is a conspicuously high proportion of intelligent and interesting faces, and the manners of the people have much of that geniality of the air they breathe.

Why is this country so conspicuously poor? Why are its roads so abominable that even between this prosperous pleasure resort of Estoril and Lisbon, a dozen miles away, an automobile journey is a dangerous adventure? Why are my letters and cables decaying in the Lisbon post-office, and why does everyone say that things are going from bad to worse, and hope for such violent remedies as a dictatorship? In no part of Europe is the riddle of European decay posed so plainly as it is here in this setting of windy sunshine and gay colour and natural wealth.

The full answer to that riddle so far as it concerns Portugal would involve a long history. But certain broad operating causes may be noted. All Europe suffers from division, but it is in the smaller countries that the evils of division are most apparent. The smaller the country the nearer the Custom House and the more hampered the trade. Lisbon might be one of the greatest ports of Europe as Beira in Portuguese Africa might be the chief port of South Africa, but for this, that a little way behind each is a national frontier with a strangulating Custom House. No goods or passengers will endure the present railway journey through Spain and Portugal if they can find another way to the high seas. The railways are necessarily short little railways and they are inefficient. And every sort of transport, and indeed every concern depending upon organised labour, is further troubled by another consequence of the sub-division of Europe. The money is unstable. Portugal, like every proud little sovereign State, must, of course, have its own currency. Anything else would be unthinkable to the patriotic Portuguese. But the currency of so small a country is at the mercy of big speculative interests abroad. The recent postal strike turned entirely upon the readjustment of wages to rising prices. That is the common issue in nearly all European labour struggles now, but it produces its acutest conflicts in the weaker countries.

The railways of Portugal are in a very bad condition and the roads are frightful. Everywhere there are the visible evidences of incompetent or corrupt administration. A little country like this, with an unstable currency, cannot keep its popular education up to date; there is not a sufficient reading public therefore to sustain an authoritative Press and literature of political criticism. Ministers are

not sufficiently watched. And as to the things that happen in the overseas possessions of Portugal one can hardly learn anything at all from the Portuguese Press. No “public opinion” seems to be watching them at all. There is a distraction of interest to other centres. Portuguese who grow rich in the Portuguese possessions bank and invest their money abroad, chiefly in London; there is a perpetual outgoing of this tribute from the Portuguese empire to the stabler, greater States. Nowhere else in Europe has one so strong a feeling of a country in pawn to capital held abroad.

It seems to me that the full exercise of national sovereignty in Portugal lies at the root of all its present troubles. It is a convenient specimen, so to speak, of the universal European disease: the attempt to treat what are now only parts of a system as though they were still complete wholes. Its absolute independence, instead of securing its people the full benefits of freedom and all the material possibilities of the land, is the very thing that keeps the country dependent upon big international financial and business interests. If Portugal, instead of standing alone with its colonies to fight the financial and economic forces of the world, were part of a combine of States, acting together politically, financially, and economically, it would be in a far better case than it is at the present time. I have no doubt in my own mind that if Portugal were a free State in a larger union in which sovereignty was sufficiently merged to ensure a common currency, a common inter-State traffic control, free trade at least within the union, common labour conditions, and a common front to the speculative forces that are destroying Europe, her outlook would be vastly different from what it is to-day. She would very speedily cease to be a land of slovenly and increasingly inaccessible loveliness, and her people would no longer be the most lamentably wasted nation in Europe.

And I do not see that such a union is a very remote or improbable thing. A congress of Latin Pressmen has recently been held in Lisbon, and beneath a turbid flow of compliments and flatteries there were many signs of a real and practical recognition of the possibility of, and the enormous material advantages of, a federation of Latin Europe and Latin America. There seems to be a growing recognition in Portugal, Spain, Italy, France, and Latin America of the essential

similarity of the Latin civilisation in all this wide patchwork of States. It may lead sooner than English-speaking people expect to practical political co-operation. From the point of view of world civilisation all such agglomerations of States, that will gradually relax the intensity of nationalist concentration, are desirable and welcome developments.

XXVI

Reconstruction of the league of nations: the practical problem

8.3.24

If the world had suddenly become rational in November 1918, I suppose there would have been a conference of all the Powers of the world to atone for their common sins and restore their common welfare. But as the world is some thousands of years yet from rational collective conduct we have the treaty of the Victors, the Demi-League of Nations, and all the post-war disorder, waste, and misery that still unfold upon us. The League is unsoundly planned; it stands on rotten foundations; it is poisoned by the delusion that sovereign States are real enduring human things instead of being arrangements entirely provisional and largely hallucinatory, and it does not represent more than a portion of mankind. Still, there is talk of at last bringing in Russia and Germany, and it will be interesting to see how the people who have got hold of it will set about tinkering up an arrangement with the German people and the Russian Soviet States.

In Britain and America there are considerable organisations for the glorification of the League of Nations. In Britain, in the countryside

especially, the League of Nations Union has become a social feature, rather like a more liberal Primrose League; it has pleasant meetings, parties, bazaars, tennis tournaments, fêtes with sack races, and so forth, and no parliamentary candidate can afford to neglect it; but it has no ideas worth speaking about of how the problems of a world organisation are to be approached. It just glorifies, simply and loyally. At the beginning of the League of Nations Union a few of us made a desperate attempt to establish a Research Department in the organisation. We felt there were a lot of things we didn't know and that had to be known about the psychology of international co-operation, a lot of questions about scope and method that wanted hammering out, and that the time was short before action was thrust upon us. It was, however, impossible to get anything effective done. Few of our colleagues realised that there was anything in the business that could not be settled at once by anyone with a good heart and a clear, loud voice; that Research Department faded out in the platitudinous blaze of Lord Grey's great meeting in Westminster; and then Mr. and Mrs. Wilson came to Europe, and upon the wave of their coming this present League of Nations, such as it is, a ramshackle raft of political misconceptions, achieved its magnificent launch. Future generations will study its incredible constitution in a desperate attempt to realise the full mental slovenliness of our times. Personally, I am for a world conference to take it down and build something better, but that is because I have a simple, straightforward mind. What everyone will consider more practicable and more politic will be to alter it bit by bit and worry it round, tortuously and expensively, towards the form of a League of Mankind against Nations, that it ought to have been from the beginning.

Now how are Germany and the Union of Soviet States coming into the League? Are they to come in as Boss States, like the British Empire, with a parcel of accessory faggot votes representing Dominions and Possessions, or are they to come in on a footing with Hayti, the Hedjaz, Abyssinia, and so forth? Will they come in as the equals of Abyssinia? I would like to know the ideas of the Prime Minister upon this question. I do not think the present constitution of the League of Nations allows them to come in on any tolerable terms

at all. That being so, it follows that any attempt to bring in either or both of these great masses of people will involve a special conference to reconstruct the League; the League will have to liquidate and reconstruct itself. Both Germany and Russia, that land of new ideas, may have some bold proposals to make. In Britain we have had little but fulsome praise or angry exposure of the League since it was set up at Geneva. In America it has been talked about endlessly, but I do not know if it has been thought about at all. In France there are signs of an awakening to the needs of a reconstructed League. M. Bertrand, of the *Quotidien*, calls for a League that shall represent peoples and not Governments, and proclaims that the first article of the Republican Credo. The time is at hand when the League might be very beneficially altered, given a better balance, and made more serviceable to mankind.

One cardinal evil could be attacked and at least minimised: the absurd pretence that anything with the legal status of a sovereign State is a nation, a people, a thing with a distinctive soul and an individuality, entitled to full and equal consideration in the counsels of mankind. It is to this we owe the intolerable absurdity that while such highly individualised people as the Scotch and Welsh have no voice as such in the world's affairs, a trumped-up State like the Hedjaz votes and speaks on an equality with Holland or Denmark, and that while one group of black barbarians is solemnly welcomed as Abyssinia (that age-long friend of Poland) the far better educated and altogether more civilised Zulu and Basuto peoples must be represented by a tenth of the coat-tails—it works out at about that, I believe—of Lord Cecil. If nations and races are all to be represented, then India is full of them, from the Veddahs upward; if sovereign independence is the standard, then India has no rightful place at Geneva. But if we recognise fully that the League we need is to serve the purposes not of nations but of mankind, then we shall cease to be embarrassed either logically or practically by political oddities or ethnological rarities.

Let us consider in its crudest form a possible alternative. Should the League of Nations be put upon a population basis and should its members have a card vote after the pattern of a British Trade Union Congress, in which each representative has votes in proportion to

the number of workers he represents? This would give an undesirably heavy voting power to the quasi-representatives of great barbaric illiterate populations. In world affairs an illiterate population can have no will because it can have no knowledge. But supposing voting power were given in proportion to the number of literates in a population or to the number of University students. Then we should at least get some sort of approximation to the relative intelligence and power of the various States. And suppose that subject to this definition of voting power every State sent just as few or just as many representatives to the Assembly and appointed them or selected them and distributed its votes among them as it thought fit. And suppose the council were appointed, not by nations, but indifferently by the vote of the Assembly. Then at Geneva we should really be getting towards something like a representation of the civilisation of the world or of the civilisation of as much of the world as took part in it. We really should have a body with authority behind it, capable of handling something more than the petty arbitrations and the necessary small arrangements of international affairs, of which the present propagandists of the League of Nations make such boasts.

It is amazing how unable people seem to be to realise the full danger of an assembly entirely dominated by the idea of competitive nationalism, and the urgent necessity of getting away from that idea, however great the mental exertion required. For suppose presently Mr. MacDonald is successful in getting in Russia and Germany, and suppose the League begins to handle such larger questions as disarmament, European currency, tariffs, and so forth, then just as the interests involved become greater, so much the more nationalist will the spirit of the delegates and representatives become. The League gatherings under the present constitution will certainly become battlegrounds of great nationalist interests. The dear little smaller States will be drawn into groups and alliances about the greater States. They will not be able to help themselves. Their votes will be cowed and bullied or bribed votes. So long as the members go to Geneva to represent not mankind but national Governments they will go there in a diplomatic, bargaining, and competitive spirit. There will develop a pro-French or pro-British group, and an anti-

French or anti-British group; the alliances and antagonisms of another great war may easily work themselves out upon the floor of the League gatherings. That all the nations of Europe and under European influence may have been got to meet in Geneva will in itself be no more a guarantee of peace than was the meeting of the United States Congress before the election of President Lincoln a guarantee of peace in America. It is a matter of supreme importance to the whole world that before it is too late this body which we now call the League of Nations should be denationalised and put upon a cosmopolitan basis.

XXVII

The labour party on trial: the folly of the five cruisers

15.3.24

I have recently been watching British politics from a rather interesting angle; I have been seeing Britain through Latin eyes from the Portuguese corner of Europe. Events come to me generally in this order. First the Lisbon *Diario des Noticias* comes in with my coffee; next day the French *Quotidien* arrives before lunch and the Italian *Secolo* at dinner, and there is usually another twenty-four hours before a bundle of London papers comes to hand. The Paris *Daily Mail* or the *Action Française* may come in neck and neck with the *Quotidien*, but I don't go out of my way to see them. I get no American papers at all. In this perspective the death of Dr. Theophilo Braga, a sort of Frederic Harrison, who was the first President of the Portuguese Republic, and a congress of Latin Pressmen in Lisbon take on the importance of considerable international events, and all that looms largest in the London *Times* or the American Press undergoes a compression that amounts at times to complete effacement. That stupid outrage upon civilisation, the deportation of Miguel de Unamuno, the great rector of the University of Salamanca,

to the Canary Islands because of his disrespect for the Spanish monarchy and dictatorship gets a large Press in all these Latin countries. It matters to them. It ought to matter to every civilised man. The petroleum scandals in the United States get a rather muddled attention; every country has the oil scandals it deserves; and there were important articles upon the death of President Wilson. In its day the coming of the League of Nations was a great event. Otherwise there has been very little notice either of the United States or the overseas Empire of Britain. America means Brazil, and "overseas" Angola.

The Latin mind has always inclined to be sceptical and cynical about the League of Nations. Was it Anglo-Saxon practicality or Anglo-Saxon hypocrisy behind this new thing? Did the Americans and British mean what the League seemed to mean, or was it just another of their deep inexplicable manœuvres? The doubts have long since carried the day. The Paris *Quotidien* supports the League, indeed, but it concerns itself very little about the criticism or creative reconstruction of the League, as it would do if it regarded the concern as a working reality. It treats the whole business as a sort of ethical deep breathing—good chiefly for the soul. When it refers to it, a note of piety comes into its style.

The arrival of a Labour Government in Britain was a matter for lively attention in all these Latin lands. Liberal thinkers everywhere welcomed it with a hopefulness that was only very faintly tainted by suspicion. Here, perhaps, was a new thing, a break in the age-long British tradition of heavy national selfishness and overbearing self-righteousness. Bits of election addresses, Labour manifestos, and so forth, had filled up columns and carried headlines in every paper from Oporto to Fiume and from Mexico to Buenos Aires. This Labour stood for a reconstituted League of Nations, with wider powers; it stood for a generous treatment of Russia and Germany; it stood for disarmament; it stood for a universal retrenchment of military and naval expenditure and a surcease of grabbing and exploitation. Once again, just as with the League of Nations, the Latin Press betrayed the peculiar power which the great English-speaking community might and could exercise, of putting over broad political ideas to the world at large. There is a natural reciprocity between the mind of the

Latin community and ours; it is far more delicately critical and far less rudely creative. We can do much to sustain or destroy its faith. It can do much to clarify our ideas.

The first utterances of the new Government were scanned with exceptional closeness; the gestures of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald were watched with ten times the attention that was ever given to Mr. Baldwin's. The prompt recognition of Russia was widely approved of; the rather empty politenesses towards M. Poincaré were taken as evidence of an essential goodness of heart and a desire to give him a fair chance—and then came this business of the cruisers. It would be hard to exaggerate its evil effect. The first I saw of it was in the Lisbon morning paper. The paragraph was headed "Signor MacDonald, Militarist," and the statement was made without any qualification that the Labour Government was to lay down the keels of five new cruisers forthwith. It seemed incredible. Followed the French and Italian papers. The Italians were derisive at this footnote to the disarmament conference at Rome, and the French clamoured for six cruisers in reply to the British "challenge." The *Quotidien* was disappointed but not surprised. The caricaturists, who do so much in the Latin countries to personify the character of nations and peoples, got to work, and are still at work, rubbing in this last revelation of the British soul. One discerned the sensitive, the irritable Latin mind sick with disgust and bitterly ashamed of itself for its folly in supposing for a moment that the Labour programme was anything more than electioneering flummery. "Labour" was just a fine name for a group of British politicians as dishonest, as basely "patriotic," as dangerous to the welfare of Europe as any other group.

Never has there been so gross, so stupid and needless a sacrifice of moral capital in international relations. I do not see how Mr. Ramsay MacDonald can ever restore the provisional credit the liberal thought of the Latin States had accorded him. The guns of those five cruisers, though not one of them ever materialise and though they will certainly prove obsolete weapons before they can ever be finished, will have blown the prestige of the British Labour Government as a possible European peacemaker to smithereens.

I will confess I shared this immense disillusionment. As one who had written and spoken to the text of the Labour programme at the

last general election, as one who had explained that the Labour Party at least would have the courage for disarmament and a better use for the taxpayers' money than battleship building, I did my best to suspend my judgment until the London newspapers came to hand with Mr. Ramsay MacDonald's speech upon this issue. It seemed impossible that he could have gone the complete Amery he has done. I could not believe that he would not have realised that this thing his Government has done was not a mere parochial extravagance but an act of intense international significance. I expected to find some explanations, some palliations, some apology, that could be put before the foreign observer. I found a speech—the rottenest Old Parliamentary Hand could not have made a more parliamentary speech. It was in two parts: the first part was an ingenious quibble about these ships being merely the replacement of "wastage"—as though the naval equipment of a country was a constant thing that had to be kept up to a standard mark instead of being an incessantly variable thing—and the second was a scarcely veiled admission that the building of these unnecessary and provocative ships was a bribe to the labour in the dockyard constituencies. There was not a word to anticipate the inevitable interpretation of the act abroad; there was not an indication on the part of this astonishing Foreign Minister that the affair would even be observed abroad.

One does not buy a weapon without an enemy in view, and I am altogether at a loss to see what enemy Mr. MacDonald has in view—unless it is the Conservative candidates in the shipbuilding constituencies. Does he think he may have to fight France or Italy or Japan or the United States? Those five cruisers will be no good in a war with France; we should have to tuck them away somewhere and put patrols of submarine chasers to take care of them. In a war between France and Britain the mutual suicide, so to speak, would be achieved through the air. The cruisers would hardly be of more use against Italy. It is Italy, however, which is likely to be most estranged by the thought of them. Italy or Japan. Is there a ghost of a chance of a war with either the United States or Japan? It is our excellent custom to defer to the United States, and we always shall. This leaves Japan. Can anything but the blackest folly bring us into a

conflict with Japan except on some issue which would put the United States on our side?

These cruisers are to cost five million pounds—or more if, failing the Capital Levy, Britain is forced to inflation—and they are to give employment to some few thousands of men. Meanwhile I gather that the educational clauses of that magnificent Labour programme which was to have kept the next generation at school (and off the crowded labour market) until it reached the age of sixteen are to be crippled—à la Fisher—for want of funds.

The more Parliament changes, I perceive, the more it is the same thing. It is organised for politicians by politicians; it is elected so stupidly that the statesman wilts into the politician so soon as he breathes its air. He ceases to see beyond the division lobby and the dockyard vote. If laying down cruisers is the chief business of government and the chief end of taxation, I would rather, on the whole, see Mr. Amery spending my money than Mr. Ammon.

XXVIII

Dictators or politicians?
the dilemma of civilisation

22.3.24

The drift towards dictatorships in many of the European countries has been very marked in the last few years. The mental distress and physical discomforts arising out of the steady process of financial, social, and economic decay in the tangle of nationalist States in Europe, have liberated a lively and widespread discontent with the methods of representative government. The legal way and the parliamentary way has seemed too long, tedious, and disingenuous for the urgent needs of the times. In Italy and Spain, in Hungary and Germany, we have had the complete dictatorship; the shadow of a dictatorship has fallen upon the French outlook. There has been an outbreak of bosses, strong men, tyrants after the Greek pattern, statesmen with special powers, suspensions of the constitution and so forth, across the entire European stage.

To a certain small extent this may be due to a rebellion of ordinary common-sense people against the absurdity of committees doing one-man jobs. In America the disposition to give great powers to mayors and prominent public servants—a disposition which Mr.

Belloc calls, absurdly enough, a disposition to “monarchy,” and makes out to be a fundamental difference between Americans and Europeans—is probably due mainly to the perception of the need for a single head and a free hand in many complicated jobs. But the job is defined, and the term of power is defined. That concentration of *ad hoc* powers in a single competent responsible person is of course a legitimate and most hopeful development of democratic method. It is no more “monarchy” than the power of a judge is monarchy. But the drift in Europe, in Germany, and the Latin countries generally is to a general and not to a specific free hand. The man is there not to do this or that specified thing but to take the whole power of the State out of the hands of the politicians. Russia is a special case; the dictator there is the ghost of Karl Marx acting through the Communist Party. But Russia is as far from parliamentary democracy as any country in the world. Parliamentary democracy did for a brief interval appear in Russia, but it was as suitable wear for that country at its present phase of education as a silk hat for a whale.

Why have all these dictatorships sprung up? Why has there been this decline of faith throughout the world in the Anglo-Saxon device of parliamentary government? Every intelligent person must know that this is a world of men and not supermen, and every lapse to a dictatorship implies a belief in a superman. Every year of a dictatorship diminishes the autonomous vitality of a community, no dictatorship is proof against the degeneration of the dictator through impunity and presumption, and no dictator has ever provided an efficient successor. Yet we find the peoples of important European countries acquiescing in Mussolinis, Riveras, and the like, and powerful minorities in almost every European State asking for similar dictatorships. It is not that they are blind to the defects of dictatorships, but that they dislike parliamentary government more. A dictator may carry on a Government roughly and dangerously, but in many cases Parliaments have failed to carry on government at all.

English-speaking peoples are beginning to realise that what they call “democracy” may not be a universal panacea, and that Parliamentary and Congressional government as it flourished in the nineteenth century with two parties and a choice for the elector limited to two party hacks, instead of being a method of universal

validity and altogether perfect, was a temporarily convenient method of government for a fairly homogeneous dominant middle class living under apparently stable conditions. Social developments in Western Europe evolved this class throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and a national mentality was evolved concurrently. Transferred to alien soils, parliamentary institutions wilt or become weedy. And it is extremely doubtful whether in Britain, that mother of Parliaments, it is possible for the parliamentary machine to work now except in a very hectic and unsatisfactory way, unless it undergoes extensive adaptations to meet the great financial, economic, and social stresses that have still to try the British community.

In a previous paper I have discussed the electoral reforms whereby Parliament or Congress could be made really representative of the national mind, would cease to be an arena for a stupid and boring party conflict, and would become a smaller assembly, a working council, alive throughout, appointing and criticising the various Ministries. But a reform of representative methods is not in itself a sufficient solution to our problem. A graver and profounder weakness both of the American and British community at the present time is the incoherence and diffuseness of public opinion. Great changes in the range and material of economic life during the last quarter of a century and the financial earthquakes that have followed the war have shattered the old homogeneous and dominant middle-class stratum on both sides of the Atlantic. That was the reservoir of public opinion, and there is nothing equivalent on the new scale to replace it. There have been bold extensions of the franchise in Britain to great classes of inexperienced and inattentive voters; Mr. Adamson's Bill has brought us within sight of universal suffrage for every man and woman over twenty-one; but there has been no development of political education upon the same scale. Probably a third of the British voting mass after these additions—seven millions, say—will be too indifferent to political issues to vote at all. A half, another ten or eleven millions, will vote for trivial or silly reasons, and will certainly never take the slightest trouble to sustain the Parliament it has elected. Politically they will accept anything they get. They have still to learn to consider politics seriously. There remains about a sixth of the British electorate; less

than five millions, a miscellany of every sort of opinion and drawn from every class, with this much in common, that it cares enough about politics to fight about them if necessary. But it is not this sixth but the half that the vote-hunting politician need consider. And it is not the half but some sections of the sixth which may presently resort to illegal methods to achieve its ends.

Are we so remote and secure from the violent phase in Britain as people are apt to suppose? Can Britain go on indefinitely with a crazy electoral method that leaves masses of people thwarted and masses indifferent, and that leaves the mandate of any Government ambiguous? The present Government picks its precarious way amidst issues of the most inflammatory sort. The financial difficulty is not tackled; the Capital Levy is shelved for the time, and we do not know whether the method of taxing and more or less expropriating large bulks of property only, or the method of taxing every creditor, great or small, down to the penny of credit in the beggar woman's hand, is to be followed. One or other it must be. The first course will evoke the prompt resistance of the Fascist element in the Tory Party. Since the great days of the gun-running by Carson and F. E. in Ulster and the Curragh Pronunciamento, the Tories have been infected with dreams of reactionary illegalities. Army people and so forth are drenched with such stuff. They lost Ireland by it, but they are quite capable of setting about to lose England by the same methods. But though the Tory elements in British life might easily attempt forcible resistance to parliamentary socialisation, they are far too unintelligent to face the alternative of inflation, which will certainly produce just such conditions as will promote a drift towards revolution from the Communist end.... Violence from either side means ultimately dictatorship and the opening phase of a process of disorder and collapse for the entire British system. Between the horns of this dilemma the existing British system has still a few years left in which to modernise, enlarge, and clean its parliamentary methods and to educate its masses to political efficiency.

XXIX

Youth and the vote: the rejuvenescence of the world

29.3.24

The recent discussion of the extension of the British parliamentary suffrage has been an amusing and instructive display. The finer parts of the debate upon Mr. Adamson's Bill were a little overshadowed in the Press by the Duchess of Atholl's possibly exaggerated objection to the proposed enfranchisement of several hundred travelling tinkers, and her nightmare of all the women in the country voting down all the men in the country upon some unexpected issue. I must confess that I am not very much interested by the question whether there are to be slight traces of tinker in the next election or not, and the end of the world by collision with some other planet seems a far less remote possibility to me than the lining up of the two separate sexes in flat opposition to each other. But what did interest me was to note that everyone seemed to have caught up his or her opinion just anyhow, and worn it much as people wear false noses at a carnival, and that in the whole ridiculous fray there was no apparent perception of any general reason why some people should vote and not others. I could not find any evidence that a single member had

asked himself why people had to vote at all, whether it was a privilege or a duty to vote, and what were the proper qualifications or just claims of a voter.

Mostly, I don't think they had ever asked themselves any such questions. Members of Parliament don't think about questions of that kind. They seem to think very little about anything of importance in the world, so much of their time is spent in division lobbies and loafing and gossiping about the House of Commons; but what attention they do give to franchise and electoral method is usually given in close consultation with a parliamentary agent, who is far from the spirit of scientific truth.

Let us try and put the question on rather broader foundations than the House succeeded in doing. And, to begin with, let us consider whether the age of twenty-one is a sensible age at which to graduate a citizen as voter. Sir Sydney Russell-Wells and Sir Martin Conway, two University members, very properly declared it was not. With that we can well agree. Twenty-one marks no natural epoch in the mental and moral life of either man or woman. It is too old for adolescence and too young for any other phase. Twenty-one is a magic compound of seven and three, but nowadays we do not believe very much in the magic of numbers. The reasons why twenty-one was made the "coming-of-age" are lost in the mists of antiquity. But why these two gentlemen should propose therefore to make five-and-twenty the minimum age for a voter of either sex is not very clear. Sir Martin Conway, indeed, warmed up to a luscious eloquence about "woman's great flowering time." The young woman between twenty-one and twenty-five "should have her eye upon the glory of life," and so forth. Even if this were so, it is a little hard to understand the application of the limit to men. Apparently the young man is to undergo a sort of political "couvade" during these rich years, and think sympathetically about babies. As a matter of fact, lots of women far over twenty-five have not yet reached these preoccupations; it would, indeed, be highly improper for most of these below that limit to engage their minds in this fashion, since the majority do not marry until close upon twenty-five, and many much later. The twenty-fifth birthday is, indeed, no more a natural epoch for woman or man than the twenty-first, and Sir Martin Conway's

argument was just a sample of the careless nonsense people talk on these important questions.

But if neither twenty-five nor twenty-one is a real natural division line between the human being capable of citizenship and the junior, the natural minor, where shall we draw that line? I would suggest that we draw it at the age when the individual's education comes to an end. Education, we are assured, is to prepare the individual for citizenship. When a State turns its young people out of its schools into the streets to seek employment and toil for the community, it tacitly declares that their preparation for citizenship is at an end. If they are not prepared for citizenship they should not be turned out. If they are, then they ought to go on at once to the most stimulating exercise of the rights of citizenship, and vote before they forget their lessons in history and geography and economics and so forth. Why should they have to wait for years, forgetting nearly every general idea they have learnt before the vote comes to rouse them? But the reader will object that this means giving the vote to children of fourteen or indeed in some American States to children even younger. I submit that is no disproof of the principle I have laid down, but only a disqualification of the shocking inefficiency of the educational systems of the English-speaking world. We have no right to cheat our young people out of their votes because we are defrauding them of the best part of their education.

I am one of those people who believe that the minimum age at which whole-time general education should cease is sixteen, and that for at least two years more education in some form, a technical or industrial training at least, associated perhaps with productive employment, and a continuation of the general intellectual work should be given. That would make eighteen the boundary between tutelage and complete responsible citizenship. And to that age I am willing and anxious to see the franchise extended. Education and the franchise are correlated questions, and I do not believe a community can be in a sound state of political organisation until education has moved up and the vote moved down the scale of age to this meeting-point.

Let us consider first the justice of this. Think what we thrust upon the youth of eighteen in our communities. We voters, a good third of

us above military age, will treat him as citizen enough to undergo the utmost fatigues and horrors of war, and to be maimed and to die for us, and the girl of fourteen (is it?) may marry, and the girl of sixteen may commit herself to dishonour, and either man or girl may toil in factory or foundry. All that we put upon them. We force them by need and circumstance to forgo the better part of their education, to subdue all the wide and wonderful imaginations of these opening years, and we oblige them to contribute to the wealth of the State in unattractive work. But they may have no voice in matters in general until they are thoroughly broken in. I can see a sort of expediency in disenfranchising unsuccessful people after forty or so, they are dull and cowed by that time and will bring little to the polls but their fears and inferiorities. But why gag the young for three of their most vivid years?

And next there is to be considered the benefit to the individual citizen of stepping straight from learning to responsibility. He will be brought into conscious and effective relationship with political and industrial institutions at the same time; he will face them as two aspects of one thing just when the spirit of inquiry is strongest in him. And such of the younger women who are waking up to what Sir Martin Conway calls the “glory of life” will realise that childbearing is a thing of issues wider than the fireside; they will be called upon to think of war and education and the whole future in the very time when the continuity of life is brought most effectively before their minds. What sort of a world, what sort of political process can Sir Martin be thinking about when he suggests that a vision of the glory of life ought to disqualify a voter?

And finally let us consider the benefit to the country and the world at large of a more youthful electorate. To bring in voters in their nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first years will be to bring in three million and more fresh minds, all unsettled as yet, all facing the world adventurously. They will be a wholesome counterweight to the grudging rate-payer, the small shopkeeper, the *rentier*, the anxious and hopeless and fearful multitude of the unsuccessful and defensive middle-aged, the great supporters of “Anti-Waste” campaigns, “safety” armaments, policies of “security,” and all sorts of patriotic cowardice. These elder folk think of the next quarter day or

the next year; it is all that interests them; they will be dead soon and they want to shuffle along as comfortably and with as little troublesome novelty as possible until then. The interests of the youth of eighteen reach forward half a century and they may work with a reasonable hope of a better world for themselves as well as their children. They may have the more wisdom for the very reason that they have acquired less worldly discretion. And for all of us who believe that education is already touched by a new spirit and that it is surely being made better, the younger the age of enfranchisement the greater our hopes of an early effect of the new education upon the affairs of mankind.

"Universal education up to eighteen, universal enfranchisement at eighteen"; along that line lies our path to a real civilisation. Along that path we shall go as the breath of a new generation blows into Congress and Parliament and these assemblies cease to be the gatherings of political botchers and tinkers representing the broken spirit and curtailed desires of a forty-year-old electorate. For round about forty must be the average age of the present-day British elector.

XXX

Olive branches of steel: should the angels of peace carry bombs?

5.4.24

The will for peace is futile without the courage to disarm. I would like to have that proposition printed in large letters and put up at all the meetings of the British League of Nations Union, just to see what the worthy practitioners in easy optimism who fill these gatherings would make of it. I doubt if half the kindly idealists who support the League of Nations in Britain and America are prepared for any effectual disarmament of their own countries. For others—yes; but not for their own dear land.

Since the refusal of France even to discuss land disarmament or the question of submarines at Washington I have kept up a pretty steady fire of disagreeable allusions to France. I have sung and sung again, with variations and amplifications, my little refrain about Senegalese and Submarines in—quite a number of journals. But France has her excuses, the next election may release her from the Bloc National and the Armament firms to the free exercise of international virtue, and after all virtue should begin at home. Are not both the United States and the British Empire, considered in the rôle

of peace-seeking States, overarmed? The general will of all the English-speaking communities is, we all know and say and repeat, for an enduring world peace. But even a savage understands that he must drop and leave his weapons and hold up innocent hands before he can get to honest peace talk.

Consider a crude form of the issue. Suppose the United States and the British Empire got together and disarmed completely, suppose they retained the merest police force and placed all the rest of their joint navies at the disposal of an international council, on which they would have an adequate representation of course, what would happen? There would be an immediate reduction of public expenditure and so much relief of economic life from taxation. Would anything else happen? Would Japan suddenly fling herself upon California, Italy seize Malta and Egypt, the Red Army pour down into India, or France destroy London? Does anyone—unless it be my dear old friends Mr. Henry Arthur Jones and Mr. Leo Maxse—believe any of these things would happen? Or anything of the sort?

As a matter of fact we have France now, at the present time, so much more powerfully equipped in the air than Britain and with the British anti-aircraft establishment so reduced, that she could, if she wished to do so and dared to do so, smash up London and put most of the English naval and commercial ports out of action before any really effective counterstroke could be made. There has been a powerful Press campaign in France against Britain, and there is plenty of hostile feeling there. Led by a propagandist Press a great multitude of Frenchmen really believe that the favourite occupation of the English-speaking peoples is buying francs at one price in order to sell them at a lower one. Nevertheless, that attack doesn’t come and it never will come. The temporary satisfaction would be so poor that it would not balance the disagreeable anticipation of an ultimate revenge. Moreover, the immediate financial and economic collapse both of France and Britain would manifestly ensue. Air warfare and poison gas have so enhanced the destructiveness of war and made it so inconclusive, and France and Britain are so close together now and so accessible one to the other, that they have to face the fact—an annoying fact for every true patriot—that they can no longer regard war as a means of settling even their worst

differences. As well think of settling a dispute between two next-door neighbours by burning both their houses and massacring all the inmates. It really does not matter now which of the two Powers is the stronger on land or sea. It is a consideration of no practical value whatever between them.

And just as an attack of France upon Britain is unthinkable at the present time, although all the military advantage lies at present with France, so, too, any attack upon the vast joint territories of the United States and the British Empire, though they neither of them had a battleship in commission nor a ton of explosive ready, would be an absurd proposition. There is no other Power on earth that could do it to any profit at all, and without the ultimate certainty of a crushing rearmament and revenge. It would be like a tiger-cat trying to kill and eat an elephant. In all the world now there are only four countries capable of starting-in at complete first-class modern warfare: Britain, France, Japan, and the United States. Italy has neither the coal nor the ore necessary for so heavy an enterprise; the hairiest, loudest Fascisti in the world will not make up for that; and Russia has not the industrial plant for the necessary munitions of aggression. She has vast resisting power, as ever, but no attacking power. All the other countries of the world, if they fight nowadays, must fight with the munitions and loans the four possible belligerents grant them. These four countries therefore, of themselves, could inaugurate a world peace; and the interests of their peoples, as distinguished from the armament interests, urgently demand a secure world peace. The difficulty is to begin. The Press of each of the armament-capable four is closely interwoven with the armament profiteers, and the Press of either country will begin a campaign of panic about what the other three are doing directly there is any serious possibility of relaxed armament anywhere. Since the United States and Britain are easily first in preaching peace and arbitration to the world, I suggest that it is for them to set the example and begin. But at the first intimations of a serious abandonment of “preparedness” Lord Rothermere and his American equivalents—if there are equivalents of Lord Rothermere in America—will see to it that the nervous householder dreams of aeroplanes

coming down the chimney and submarines coming up the sink, and wakes gibbering of “security” like a *Matin*-soaked French patriot.

And most of the tremendous outfit we English-speaking peoples carry isn’t even good for war. It is like a battle-axe in a tramcar, a terrifying offensive affair, but not really effective in a fight at close quarters. The time when war was a generalised thing is past. You can no longer have an army or navy that goes anywhere and does everything. For Britain to fight France, or Japan, or the United States, or Russia, or Italy, demands in each case a different sort of warfare, with different methods and different appliances. British battleships camouflaged as cruisers and docks for them half-way round the earth would be no good against Russia or Italy, and very little use against France. Against Japan they would be good for her submarines to chase and blockade while our submarines chased and blockaded the Japanese warships. A big air force, again, would be little use against the United States or Japan. Considered in relation to any possible specific war they may have to wage, the present war establishments of the great belligerent Powers, the miscellaneous elaborate material that the armament people and their unimaginative army traditions have induced them to buy are as likely to be efficient as the equipment of the White Knight in *Alice in Wonderland*. The methods and objectives and so forth of any next war that may surprise the politicians (just as children are surprised by fires when they play with matches), conducted by the sort of soldiers we possess and with the stuff they will handle as “equipment,” will certainly be more discursive and silly and ineffective even than those great pushes and counter-attacks and raids and bombings and so forth of the last great war, and in their inconclusive way infinitely more destructive.

But if these preposterous armaments are unlikely to be conclusive in warfare, they do at any rate block the way very effectively to any reorganisation of the world for peace. You can’t make love in armour. All this lumpish preparedness keeps the atmosphere of human life unwholesome; it prevents the settlement by any frank concerted action of the tariff conflicts, financial squabbles, currency annoyance, and mutual economic injuries that are rapidly destroying the present social system. Every big nation comes into such discussions an

implicit bully. The nations have to learn the same lessons that individuals learnt in the middle ages, they have to learn not to bear arms even in the company of those who do. In the middle ages, when the loving-cup went round, one's neighbour stood as one drank to protect one's back from the assassin's knife. At last some reckless souls took heart to sit and drink and trust their fellow men. Other desperate spirits left their weapons at home—and survived. But the nations are still half-way back to barbarism. Our cartoonists draw Uncle Sam and John Bull as decent peaceable everyday citizens. They flatter our countries. Really the Great Powers should be drawn as completely canned warriors with their wary eyes and noses just peeping out of their preparedness. And this in spite of the fact that the only serious danger to either is that the weight and clumsiness of this silly equipment and of the world-wide distrust it produces will undermine his business and his national health altogether.

XXXI

The case of unamuno: the feeble republic of letters

12.4.24

There is nothing greater in the world of men than thought. Science, literature, and art; what other glories has man? And yet the company of men of science and letters and art forms but the feeblest of republic throughout the world, is insignificant socially and politically, and wins only posthumous respect.

A time may come when men will have a better sense of the values of things, and when the creative experimenter and writer and artist will be accorded something of the respect and something of the immunity we now give to royalties with the urbanity of second-rate waiters or the pluck of second-rate jockeys, and to those casual possessors of disproportionate spending power or disproportionate impudence, our social leaders. But that day when the philosopher, or the discoverer, or the great artist will be King, when there will be no recognised nobility but the nobility of the mind, is still far away. Perhaps it will never come. Perhaps there is a permanent necessity in our natures, requiring us to exalt the common qualities we share and understand and to contemn rare gifts. King Carnival, with his

vast nose and goggling eyes, is the most real, most natural of all human kings, because he is frankly grotesque, a common creature raised up and magnified. Such kings and princes, such popular heroes and fashionable leaders as we have, assist us in our self-protective struggle against the insupportable suspicion that we lack distinctive quality. We can tell ourselves that they are in no way different from us except that they are luckier. But it tortures our self-esteem to honour those who have qualities we cannot pretend to possess. That is why we love to think of the man of science as a foolish, absent-minded thing with spectacles and a butterfly-net, and listen so greedily to rumours of vice and wickedness in men of genius. There may be a profound instinctive reasonableness in this acceptance of the gift and this rejection of the giver. Ingratitude is better for the common man than servility. If we did not distrust and restrain the exceptional people in the world, they might run away from us or run away with us, until we became no more than animals under direction and control. A king is the surest protection against regal personalities and an aristocracy against any rule of the best.

The exceptional men—because they are exceptional men—have no flock instinct to hold them together for mutual protection against the crowd and its leaders. Nearly all men of distinctive gifts are jealous. They are driven by an inner necessity to assert their own special quality against the aggressive special qualities of their fellows. There is little generosity when men of science or literary and artistic men talk of one another. Their mission is to do the thing they have to do and not be good fellows with one another. When one considers this, one may be reconciled to much egoism and lack of gregariousness in the man of intellectual gifts and yet at times one may be startled by some reminder of the extreme moral disintegration which is the normal state of the “republics” of science and art and letters.

I recall my own amazement at the sudden outbreak of nationalism on the part of the men of science of all countries at the beginning of the war, and still more so at the reluctance with which they came together after the armistice, when they had had four years to think it over. When I went to the secretary of the Royal Society in 1920 and told him of the poverty of such great men as Pavloff in Petersburg

and of the urgent need of the Russian men of science for Western publications and for instruments and material kept out by our blockade, I thought the society would take up the matter forthwith as a simple obvious duty. It did nothing of the sort. It was argued that Pavloff and the others ought to have come out of Russia as white refugees, and that a body adorned with all the dukes and royal princes of Great Britain had other things to consider than mere protection of research in the world. The Royal Society was indeed, I found, not so much a society for the promotion and exaltation of science, as a society of scientific men for mutual restraint.

And now in the scandalous case of Don Miguel Unamuno comes a fresh instance of the lack of any feeling of solidarity among the world's intellectuals. Here is a great writer and professor, the ex-Rector of the University of Salamanca, a man of undisputed pre-eminence. He is a professor of classical learning: not one of the scientific or sociological fellows. He utters some lucid and deserved reproofs to the King of Spain. As all the world knows, the King of Spain has consented to, and possibly connived at, the illegal usurpation of his Government by a military junta with a dictator of straw, a sham Mussolini, Primo de Rivera. It is a dull, bad Government, chiefly concerned with the suppression of opinion and the entirely incompetent maintenance of an endless war with the Moors. For if Spanish generals have at times to display the backs of their brilliant uniforms to the Moors, they can at least keep a brave overbearing front towards Spain. No country was ever in such need of drastic public criticism as Spain at the present time. But so soon as Don Unamuno speaks plainly, he is seized and sent without trial to the Canary Islands, away from his books, his students, and all contact with the current activities of mankind. It is a purely arbitrary act. There is not even an appeal to some pseudo-academic court. It is done on the authority of the dull imitation who is failing to be the Spanish Mussolini. An oaf in uniform has struck a great teacher on the mouth and silenced him. In recent times in Europe there has never been so plain and violent a challenge to the freedom and honour of the intellectual world.

What protest has there been from that world? One might have expected vigorous outcries on behalf of Salamanca from Oxford and

Cambridge, from London and the British Academy, from Harvard and Yale and Chicago, and the hundred and one universities and colleges of North and South America, an immense outbreak of indignation. I have heard of scarcely any. From the University of Paris there has been a fairly representative protest, and Lisbon has spoken. I have seen a few paragraphs in the highbrow weeklies of Britain and America. But the intellectual workers of our English-speaking world seem as a whole to have been as little affected by this particular exploit of the King of Spain's Dictator as a flock of grazing sheep by the death of one of its number. So far as they are concerned he may shut up all the Universities of Spain and maroon their entire staffs. Their sense of any community of interests among the Universities of the world seems to be almost completely lacking. The ordinary miner or transport worker has much to teach the university professor in the matter of occupational self-respect.

Of course, both in England and America in the last dozen years or so there have been rather similar cases to this crowning outrage of vulgar force upon mind. There was the case of Mr. Bertrand Russell, for example, during the war, and in America it is inadvisable for professors of economics and social science to lean too visibly towards collectivism. And Mr. William Jennings Bryan knows all about creation and incites backward States to dismiss teachers of biology who teach contrary to the beliefs of this favoured confidant of the Deity. Perhaps an uneasy consciousness of such facts has hampered the English-speaking communities in this affair. Meanwhile Don Miguel Unamuno studies the seascapes of the Canary Islands, and, so far as his opinion of King Alfonso goes, he is restricted to conversation with the islanders.

And if by any chance King Alfonso should visit England and go to Oxford or Cambridge, all the dons and deans and heads would put on their fullest plumage to bow and scrape to him.

XXXII

An open letter to anatole France on his eightieth birthday

(Written as the English Contribution to a Booklet of Congratulation)
19.5.24

Cher Maître,—You write for the whole world, and the whole world salutes you on this happy occasion of your eightieth birthday. You are eighty years old, and yet it seemed to me a little time ago, when I paid my personal homage to you and found you, as ever, smiling, friendly, interested, and amused, that you were still untouched by age. And indeed what has age to do with you, who are already immortal, staying on here in the pleasant land of France for a time, but having made for yourself a sure habitation among that great company of writers already in Elysium who talk to youth with the freshness of youth, and to all with a living wisdom, now and for centuries to come? Millions of readers yet unborn will grow up to find in you a liberator, a choice companion, a very dear friend. We your contemporaries are only the first-comers of your following, and of those who will love and honour your name.

We writers of England are not so much a body of writers as a cloud; we have no Academy to represent us, and no acknowledged

head, and so almost by chance it falls to me, as it might have fallen to others more distinguished and deserving, to tell you of your place in the hearts and minds of the English-speaking world. All of us who can do so read you in your inimitable French, but it may not be amiss to say a word or two of the readers you have outside the community of French readers, outside that great cosmopolitan France of the mind. You have been, I think, almost completely translated into English, and in England and America there are scores of thousands who know you only in your English guise. All translations are made at a loss, but most of your translators have served you honestly and some have served you well, and you are so rich that you can pay the high tariff between our languages and still carry over enough to entrance and win fine minds. All the cultured and successful people of the world know you by necessity, and send homage to you. But I think I understand you well enough to be assured that even more than such salutations you will value the fact that there are miner lads in Scotland, railway workers in England, London clerks, and provincial shopmen, who know no more than a few hundred words of French, and yet whose faces flush and brighten at your name, workers struggling against a thousand disadvantages to possess their souls, to whom you have brought the priceless gifts of happiness and release and inspiration. I wish I could steal and send you a well-thumbed copy of an English translation of *Thaïs* or *L'Isle des Penguins* from the shelves of some English public library in evidence of this outer empire of your mind.

As spokesman for your English-speaking readers, it is natural for me to dwell upon the ease with which you wear an English costume. In many respects you are intensely French: French after the manner of the greatness of France, the France of liberty, equality, and world fraternity. But you transcend all narrow and nationalist limitations. In the past, before the great wars of the Napoleonic period, the English and French had not that sense of difference, that disposition to antagonistic contrasts, too frequently evident to-day. Intellectually our communities were more closely interwoven. Men remembered then how the Normans linked us; how Burgundian and Englishman were sturdy allies; how Briton and Breton had a common past, and how close were Frank and Fleming to the Anglo-Saxon stock. We

Normans and Saxons and Franks and Flemings and Scots and Burgundians and Gascons and Angevins built our Gothic cathedrals in brotherly competition, and our knights and bowmen and princes and bishops bickered and went to and fro. Our literatures sprang from common roots and intertwined, and were continually grafted and regrafted one upon the other. No Englishman finds anything essentially foreign in Rabelais and Montaigne; they are in the same company as Swift and Sterne, as to-day Voltaire almost lives again in Shaw. Such contemporary English writers as Belloc and Chesterton would be seen plainly for Frenchmen if they wrote in French. And we do not find in you anything foreign to our spirit and our humour. Our response to you is a kindred response. You probably have far more imitators in Britain and America than you have in all the Latin countries of the world. Some of the most promising of the newer American writers are clearly indebted to you. There are many of us writers of English—and some of these not the least among us—to whom it would be the sweetest praise to be likened to Anatole France. In the end it may be found that you have exerted an influence upon our English literature even greater than that influence upon your own. We are not intruders, therefore, not foreign admirers and outsiders, at these birthday celebrations. We English writers are here of right, and because we are akin to you and within the realm of your thought and power.

XXXIII

The European kaleidoscope: the German will in default

23.4.24

I was in Paris the other day when M. Poincaré reconstructed his Government, and I heard him make his declaration of policy to the Chamber of Deputies. I had never seen him before. It was a dramatic and amusing occasion, and I conceived for M. Poincaré the same sort of warm and hostile affection that I have for Mr. Winston Churchill and Mr. Lloyd George. He is an entirely delightful personality; he has all the charm—and much of the appearance—of a wiry-haired terrier. He even barks.

The Chamber of Deputies is in a semi-circle like a Roman theatre; there is none of the waste and confusion of effect one gets in the Gothic oblong at Westminster. The public was present by ticket; it sat in a semi-circle of little boxes within nodding distance of the deputies—and mostly it was ladies and very well dressed. High up over it all and facing it all sat M. François Arago, like a finite and protesting deity, with his recording angels behind him and a large bell convenient for his hand. Beneath him was the rostrum from which one addresses the house, and then a lower rank of reporters. But

there was no beam of limelight. The political world has still to discover limelight. It is extraordinary how slow all legislative assemblies are in adopting modern conveniences. A beam of limelight would be excellent at Westminster to indicate the direction of the Speaker's eye.

M. Poincaré read out his intentions in a hard, very audible voice. His opening sentences went to much applause and interruption. The chief scene came when, enumerating the ways in which France proposed to restore and preserve her solvency, he referred to an intensive exploitation of her colonies. "Our colonial policy," said he. "Sarraut!" cried the Left—a fine, wolf-like sound. "Our colonial policy!" said M. Poincaré with increasing firmness. "Sarraut!" "Our colonial policy," M. Poincaré repeated, in small capitals, so to speak. "Sarraut!" much louder—the Left enjoying itself. M. Poincaré brought up unexpected vocal resources. After five—or was it six?—repetitions, honour was satisfied and the statement went on.

In the horrible language of English political discussion, M. Poincaré is attempting to "dish" the Left. He was trying to make his policy look as "Left" as possible, while still remaining the same inflexible person as ever. He had thrown over various associates from the Right and brought in reasonable men from the Left Centre to liberalise the effect of his reconstituted Government. He was prepared to be generous to Germany provided she paid the uttermost farthing. He was prepared to seem to come out of the Ruhr, while in reality sticking there. He spoke hopefully and brightly and emptily of the League of Nations.

That is the quality of the new phase. M. Poincaré is talking as liberally as he can. He exchanges compliments and large liberal gestures with Mr. Ramsay MacDonald; neither of them meaning anything whatever, except a desire to pass the time and be in the fashion. It is the change in the fashion that should interest the student of affairs. M. Poincaré is getting ready for the elections in May, and his proceedings betray his consciousness of the deep strong movement of French thought and intention leftward, away from adventure and nationalism and militarism, towards—sanity. In spite of a systematically perverted news service and many provocations and natural fears, the mind of France is becoming

powerfully reasonable. It thinks less and less of glory and more and more of solvency. It is more open to-day to ideas of reconciliation, disarmament, and organised international co-operation than it has been at any time since the war.

M. Poincaré has been superficially dexterous, his majority is beautifully restored, but France and all the world know him for an honest obdurate man. I doubt if he will come back after the elections. M. Millerand has seemed to threaten a dictatorship if the Poincaré policy is defeated. Is France so Latin as to stand that? I think M. Millerand will be better advised to try a resignation. For the recent credit given to France to support the franc is probably the end of French borrowing power, and a defeat of the Left by fraud or violence—a cessation of the movement towards reason and disarmament—means a withdrawal of foreign confidence and a swift and sure financial collapse.

Now unhappily it is just at this phase of French affairs, with the peace-intending reconciling forces of France and Britain coming rapidly into accord and ascendancy, that Germany begins to manifest her least agreeable traits. The recent Munich trials, the acquittal of that foolish old monarchist blusterer, Ludendorff, the ridiculous mitigated sentences of Hitler and the other conspirators against the German Republic, and, above all, the public demonstrations of sympathy with these second-rate nationalist reactionaries, come as a real shock to our hopes of an approaching European reconstruction. Like that supremely silly incident, the neglect to lower the German flag in Washington on the occasion of President Wilson’s death, it is ugly; it betrays the bad heart. One may recognise the stream of injustices and disappointments that have been inflicted on Germany in the last five years, one may be willing to concede the right of Germans to a considerable resentment, and yet one may find it hard to forgive these sentimental dangerous reversions towards monarchism in uniform, and, above all, that petty and provocative folly at Washington.

It has been a great disappointment and discouragement to those who have worked, and who are now drawing near to the accomplishment of their work, for a reconciled Europe, to note how feeble has been the collateral movement in Germany. Where is

liberal and intelligent Germany to-day? It is begging its bread; but I do not see why it should concentrate all its energies upon begging its bread. When one goes into Germany one encounters plenty of residual swash-buckler spirit; the old heroism of the expanded chest and the high voice; and one encounters a vast amount of abject sob-stuff; but it is very hard indeed to find any Germans who seem to be steadily busy upon the reconstruction of Europe upon broad modern lines. Germany seems to be divided anatomically between the right and left. The Monarchists have the backbone and no brains; the Liberals have the brain and no backbone. When a German displays will he does something stupid and violent, and when he displays intelligence he does nothing at all. In Berlin last summer everybody I sought out and questioned talked in terms of crisis. Germany was sinking. England must do something for Germany at once. America must do something for Germany at once. The one thing they would not recognise was the necessity of Germany doing something for Germany at once. And no party has arisen, no newspapers have arisen, no leader or group of men stands out yet to embody a new Germany in a new Europe. The time of opportunity draws near and Germany, one fears, may remain too sick and beaten, too witless and unteachable, to make any use of this year of opening opportunity.

I write without any profound knowledge of things German. I may be too much impressed by the reactionary crowd in the streets of Munich. There may be deeper currents in German life which find no adequate expression in the German Press, and of which I know nothing. But with the French elections drawing near, it is time that the good Europeans in Germany, if there are good Europeans in Germany, should make themselves heard and felt. The impression I have of an unhelpful and uncreative and irresponsive Germany, cheated, it is true, and disappointed, but lapsing far too readily towards a sullen unhelpfulness, is a very general impression in France and Britain. France is under an urgent necessity of retrenchment and ready to abandon her futile aggressiveness; Britain was never less imperialist than she is to-day. Is there no German initiative to meet this new occasion?

XXXIV

China: the land out of the limelight

26.4.24

China has been out of the limelight of the newspapers lately. It is the tradition of the Atlantic civilisations to think about China as little as possible. We ignore the enormous importance of its gifts to us in the past, and we do our utmost to disregard its immediate share in the world's future.

China drove the Huns westward to relieve Europe from the decaying stagnation of the western Roman Empire. She gave the world paper, which made the printed book and newspaper possible, which made general education and the publication of scientific work possible, which indeed laid the foundation of the modern world. She taught the Mongols and Turks the organisation and military methods that ended the dying Greek impulse of the eastern Roman Empire, nearly conquered Europe, and drove the reluctant European seamen to discover South Africa and America. She numbers to-day more than a fifth part of the human race; has four times as many civilised citizens as the United States, and nearly as many as all continental Europe put together. When we discuss the struggles of a world

civilisation to exist it is well now and then to give China a thought. For China must be a pillar of that world civilisation equivalent to the whole English-speaking world.

Two or three facts of some importance are not perhaps so actively present in the general consciousness as they might be. There is a Chinese Republic with a President in Pekin, who rules more or less in most of China proper, though Canton and several other provinces get along in a state of provisional independence. But besides the President there is also a young Emperor in Pekin with a large official income—in arrears—and a remarkable English tutor. The Emperor, we are told, is quite Anglicised, he is being taught constitutional history, and presently, if the British people do not wake up to the dangers of the position, there may be an attempt, open or furtive, with British assistance, to restore the Chinese monarchy. Moreover, although I understood at the Washington Conference that Wei-hai-wei was to be given up, the British are still there—waiting for something to turn up. The British never had much right to be in Wei-hai-wei; their excuse for being there collapsed with the collapse of Russian imperialism; and probably not one British voter in the hundred is prepared for the possibly expensive and humiliating consequences of keeping there too long. The abandonment of the Singapore dock enlargement implied a policy of general withdrawal from forcible adventures in Eastern Asia. But in the untidy way of the British, the shreds and patches of some old dream of a military and political predominance in China are left to brew misunderstandings and trouble in the future.

It is not that Britain has not a profound interest in the future development of China. All the English-speaking peoples, all the other peoples in the world, have a great and increasing interest in Chinese affairs. As the world is drawn together into a political unity, the Chinaman becomes the most important neighbour of everyone. But the method of expressing an interest by grabbing and fortifying settlements, threatening coasts with warships, levying tribute and imposing iniquitous trade arrangements, is now manifestly old-fashioned and barbaric, and a new line of activities has to replace these outworn puerilities.

The English-speaking communities have to work out, and do seem to be beginning to work out, a common conception of a world order, and of their common share in it. Regarded as a point of departure, as a new turn in international thought, the League of Nations movement marks an epoch in world history. That sort of thought is still most extensively carried by the English language; shallow and weak to-day, it may become deeper and more effective as time goes on. It is in the character of the English-speaking communities. It is manifestly of primary importance that so far as possible this thinking-out of the organised peace of the world by the English-speaking communities should go on parallel with, and in touch with, the similar thinking-out of the other great communities of the world. And with no other great community is it more possible and desirable to develop a joint system of ideas and a common political and social aim, than with the great Chinese mass. It is possible, because China is to an extraordinary extent renascent and blank and ready to consider and accept points of view and constructive conceptions. China is remaking her education from the foundation. The four hundred million mass of China is at present intellectually far more plastic than the forty million mass of France, and the thirty million mass of Italy. And it is desirable as well as possible, because a successful effort to bring modern Chinese and American and British thought about the world's affairs into co-operative understanding would add the weight of four hundred million to the five hundred million of the American and British systems.

In America, China, and Britain alike there is a recognition—weak and partial though it is—of this great opportunity. The return of the Boxer indemnity, already partially repaid by America, and soon to be repaid by Britain, ear-marked for educational purposes, is an unprecedented and most significant thing in international relationships. Part of the American money has gone to educate Chinese students in English and so prepare them to become students in the American Universities. The rest is to be devoted to the development of a modern library in Pekin University. The British money is not yet apportioned, but Dr. Tsai, the Chancellor of the National University at Pekin, has recently been in London to urge the

paramount need of a museum and a properly equipped system of scientific laboratories in China.

I saw Dr. Tsai giving an address to the China Society in the London School of Oriental Studies upon these new developments of Chinese education. It was one of the most reassuring things I have witnessed for some time, that little gathering of Chinese students and of a few interested English friends, in the steep little lecture theatre in Finsbury Circus, to discuss the making-over of the Chinese mind that is now in progress. We are still in the day of comparatively small things; sums like ten million pounds are dwarfed by such figures as four hundred million people; yet they are not too small to be perceptible and significant. A growing number of Chinese are making themselves thoroughly well acquainted with all the West has to teach them; they are not simply learning and accepting, they are criticising. The perennial vigour and originality of the Chinese mind is manifested by a prompt repercussion to British and American ideas.

I have before me as I write, for example, a memorandum on *Chinese Politics and Professionalism*, by Mr. S. C. Chang, which is one of the ablest criticisms of the Anglo-American panacea of "democracy" that I have ever read. It is one of the most remarkable and admirable things about China that in a time of great political confusion whole provinces, almost without government, go on in an orderly fashion and that arts flourish and reading and teaching spread. The nucleus of the mental organisation of a new China, in close touch and sympathy with the Atlantic peoples, appears. Before a generation has passed it may have gathered sufficient power to undertake the general education of the whole Chinese people. It already inspires a considerable Press.

These new relationships of study and discussion between the English-speaking and Chinese worlds will, I hope, increase, intensify, and develop. At present it is a very extraordinary thing that, while the young Chinese students in Britain and America can be counted by hundreds, there is still no system of sending English and American students, by way of scholarships, to study Chinese life and literature in China.

The Chinese are more conscious than the English-speaking peoples of deficient knowledge, and of the need of new inspiration. Our phase is, comparatively, a phase of self-satisfaction. The Chinese will know what we think, and know long before we have realised how much we have to learn from them, and what a wholesome thing it is for us to get their point of view. For Chinese schools multiply and teaching spreads, and where there are schools and teaching there the future grows.

XXXV

Air armament: the supremacy of quality

3·5·24

Bankrupt France and out-of-work England are developing a sort of armament race in air equipment. It has not quite the vigour of the old naval armament race; it is not so expensive, and the chances for financial and industrial loot are less. But it goes on, and at present, on paper at least, France leads handsomely. On paper France is ascendant over Britain in the air, capable of inflicting vast injuries, while sustaining small reprisals, and the matter is one of great concern to many anxious souls. They have visions of London stark and stiff and twisted under poison gas and all the British ports and docks destroyed.

The vagueness of our knowledge does on the whole enhance our terrors. But it is well to remember that our knowledge *is* vague. It is particularly vague about the things that aeroplanes can carry and drop. Chemists and science students generally find an innocent pleasure in inventing wonderful rays, explosives, and lethal gases for the benefit of the ingenuous newspaper man. They invent them rather than make them. In practice the normal limitations and

insufficiencies of this earthly life apply with peculiar force to explosives and lethal gases. Only in the world of scientific romance can they be made out of nothing and instantaneously. In this sordid world of everyday they demand ingredients that are difficult and expensive to produce and limited in amount, and they require apparatus and skill and often considerable courage for their preparation. And in order to produce any serious effect on an enemy they must be delivered in huge consignments upon that enemy, and that requires a large number of aeroplanes of sufficient size to carry bulky material. Mr. Galsworthy was recently writing to the *Times* in grave alarm about the exposure of Britain to French air attack. He saw all her ports destroyed, no wharf for any food ship, England starved. I doubt if he had ever attempted to figure out how many tons of high explosive—allowing for the inevitable misses—would have to be conveyed from France to Southampton, for example, to smash up that one port alone to any decisive extent.

Before the heavy transport aeroplane can be safely used its mechanics must be insured against attack from fighting aeroplanes in the hands of highly skilled men. And this brings us to the essential objection to any panic creation of air forces. In the air quality is of supreme importance, and quality is rare. Given equal machines a good man can almost always put down a mediocre man; a man of exceptional gifts can keep on putting down ordinary men. The star air fighters in the war were men who had accounted for scores of enemy machines. Given a few exceptional men and the best machines, an air force of a few score units is capable of accounting for hundreds of inferior squadrons. God, we are told, is on the side of the biggest battalions, but this arithmetical preference, if it continues at all at the present time, is certainly restricted only to land fighting. In the air God is now manifestly on the side of intelligence, quickness, and courage. For a mastery of the air over and around one's country there is needed therefore, before all other things, a War Office capable of finding and using first-class men, aviators, mechanics and inventors. Inventors and innovators most of all. After that, it must have money for the best material. But the money and the bulk of the product is a secondary matter. It is only after the air

war is won that the big omnibuses full of bombs can come into play for more than incidental raids.

Now it is doubtful if any War Office exists or can exist capable of carrying on a skilled air warfare. There is something subtly stupid and unscientific about this war business, and you will never find first-class imaginations giving themselves freely and continuously to war organisation. Great men like Cromwell or Mr. Trotsky may do miracles of war organisation under necessity, but it is only puerile types like Mr. Amery who can go on planning war in peace time. The soldier is, has been, and always will be a rather limited and usually a rather thickheaded person. It follows therefore that if ever there should be a real, fully-prepared-for war in the world again—a thing which, as the unrepentant author of the phrase “The War to End War,” I am naturally disposed to doubt—then probably the air warfare which will dominate it will be a warfare conducted with machines far below the quality of the best contemporary knowledge, and by men below the highest attainable standard. It may be, therefore, a clumsy war, as needlessly destructive as the great war; and the lumbering big aeroplane, with its tons of explosive, in search for targets of military significance, will incidentally smash up all sorts of precious things. But the less clumsy air-warfare is the less it will do that. It is a paradoxical-looking but quite valid proposition that the less we develop special skill and invention in air-warfare the more prolonged and destructive air-warfare is likely to be. A brilliantly clever and trained and equipped air force might even be capable of purely defensive warfare. A clumsy, abundant air force, incapable of encountering and outflying its antagonists, could only work by the cruel and de-civilising method of reprisal raids.

For these reasons I think it almost as regrettable that Mr. Ramsay MacDonald should talk so readily of a sort of Washington Conference for Europe upon air disarmament as that he should have consented to the replacement building of the five cruisers. Nothing will ever restrain nations at war from making a belligerent use of the air; and the alternative to a specialised scientifically developed air fighting force will be a mobilisation of civil transport air planes for offensive use. This will not be a diminution but an aggravation of the

horrors of air attack so far as the ordinary civilised man on the ground is concerned.

A number of people seem to consider civil air transport as the natural reserve for war aviators and machines. The British have recently subsidised the various commercial concerns which run the poor, partial, under-equipped air services between Britain and the Continent, to the extent of a million pounds, no doubt with some such fancy about air reserves in mind. The consolidation of the British air companies was followed at once by a reduction of the salaries of the pilots, and a defensive strike on their part. The ideal pilot of the companies seems to be a higher sort of omnibus driver, hardly better paid. So far there has been no visible increase in equipment. Nothing could have brought out more plainly the essential conflict between profit-making and public service. The need of civilisation in respect to peace and war ends alike is to work out the possibilities of flying to their utmost extent and at any cost to attract exceptionally capable men to every branch of the service. The natural aim of a consolidated group of companies seeking profit is to stabilise conditions at the nearest possible profitable level, regardless of the future and the public welfare. In no branch of human activity is private enterprise for gain more mischievous than in transport, and in no field of transport has private enterprise shown itself more wasteful and futile than in air transport. During the war flying was everywhere a State enterprise, and enormous progress was made in every development of air science. Since the war progress has slowed down to negligible proportions under the magic touch of the modern business man. His method is to standardise; he is the enemy of distinctive quality wherever it is to be found.

XXXVI

Labour politicians: the evaporation of the intelligenzia

10.5.24

At the last General Election the British Labour Party was supported with the most whole-hearted enthusiasm by a great cloud of artistic and intellectual workers. It had the Intelligenzia solidly for it. It had all the higher and better theatrical and artistic workers on its side: such great literary names as Bernard Shaw and Bertrand Russell, such men of science as Soddy. They supported it for a variety of very understandable reasons. They were revolted by the mean and sterile dullness of the two historical but disintegrating parties. They were bored to death by Mr. Asquith, Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. Baldwin, Lord Birkenhead, their endless differences, and their essential resemblance. They were attracted by the brave hopefulness and the constructive programme of the new party. They were even allowed to dot the i's and cross the t's of its ample promises. No doubt they helped at the election, though Heaven knows to what extent. They certainly brought in youth, ever in love with ideas, to canvass and toil for the party; they brought in clever journalists and able controversialists.

But all that was six months ago. Now Labour has been tarnished by office I doubt whether it will exercise the same compelling magic upon intellectually adventurous people. There is all the difference in the world between encouraging a Labour Party which promises everything glorious, and bolstering up a Labour Government which does nothing amusing. I doubt if the Intelligenzia is likely to be very energetic when the next election comes.

It is not in the nature of an Intelligenzia to support a political party in office. Its function in the community is to criticise actuality, and to startle and enlarge people's æsthetic, scientific, political, and social perceptions. It is always against the thing that is, and it is always in advance of the thing that can practically be. And what it is saying of the Labour Government now is that it is just as dull and just as shifty and just as futile as a Left Liberal Government would have been. Mr. C. P. Trevelyan seems to have some meritorious intentions about education, and there has been a recognition of Russia—which the Liberals would have given us just as well. Apart from that, what have the Intelligenzia got for all their support of Labour?

In Mr. Ramsay MacDonald we have one of the ablest of living public speakers, a Prime Minister of unparalleled piety and gentility, but that is insufficient to console the Intelligenzia for their general disappointment. The more brightly the personality of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald shines, the less visible are the creative ideas for which their advanced spirits followed him. Instead of some genuine effort toward disarmament there has been the most foolish treatment possible of the business of the five cruisers. There has not even been a gesture towards the nationalisation of transport, mines, and the production of staple commodities. At least the Labour Ministers might have availed themselves of official files and opportunities, to prepare reports, digest facts and set inquiries afoot that would open a way to future nationalisation. The Capital Levy has gone behind a screen. There has been a muddle over housing and a resort to Liberal assistance. These Labour leaders over whom the Intelligenzia waved its banners of constructive Socialism and of a world remade, so bravely, turn out to be for the most part just ordinary politicians abjectly afraid to stop anything or start anything that may affect votes.

There is the utmost symbolical value in the behaviour of the new Labour Ministers towards Court affairs. Great Britain is a monarchy and the Ministers must go to Court, but there was no law and no necessity to require a Labour representative in a Labour Ministry to dress up in an expensive and unsuitable livery. The neat blue serge suit in which such a man would attend a Labour Congress or pay his respects to his God in church or chapel was surely good enough for a Court visit. A red tie, perhaps, in suitable cases could have emphasised the note of Socialism. But no! These men the Intelligenzia worked for and elected as the representatives of a new age must needs set out at once to beg, borrow, or steal the uniform of the old. As the newspaper photographs witness, most of them wear it with little grace or dignity. They have the self-conscious solemnity of a new local mayor in his robes. As a rule it matters little what a man wears, but these liveries betrayed stupendous acquiescences.

It was unfortunate for the good relations of the Intelligenzia with the Labour Party that two police spies were found under the platform of a private meeting of the Communist Party the other day. The Intelligenzia will always have a very tolerant corner in its heart for the Communist Party in Britain and America. The party gets hold of a lot of the best of the young people and does them a lot of good. It is extremist, and you cannot have a healthy mental life in a community in which extremist opinions and intentions are not fairly stated. Prohibition of opinions is an insult to adult citizens. In Great Britain at least the Communist Party is a perfectly legal organisation. It has as much right to hold a private meeting as the Liberal or Tory Party. It is the business of the police and Government to respect and protect its privacy. Mr. Henderson ought to know a lot about the Communists. They supply a healthy criticism and irritant on the Left wing of his party. He ought to have known this police annoyance was going on, and he ought to have stopped it as soon as he came into office. Either he knew this meeting was going to be spied upon or he did not. If he did he does not understand freedom, and if he did not his officials are lacking in respect for him.

In a large number of quite symptomatic affairs the Labour Government either through ignorance or through other

preoccupations has failed to take advantage of its opportunities, and each one of these failures estranges some new group of intelligent people. For example, everyone with a vision a little wider than the politician's realises the importance of China to the future of mankind. In the long run, even the question of the mishandling of the five cruisers may prove less serious than negligence on the part of our Government toward the China Boxer indemnity money. The Chinese ask for a directive voice in that matter. Dr. Tsai is the Chancellor of Pekin University; he represents the best educational influences in China. He comes to London, but he finds most of the Ministers he wants to see too busy trying on their breeches and stockings to see him. He is given a nice talk with a permanent official, and told in the best official style that all his suggestions will be most carefully considered by the "Committee." The Committee which is to be set up may be just the sort of Committee that destroys the confidence of progressive Chinamen in British good faith. As it was first planned it represented material interests strongly; it had only one member who could be called an educationist; and there was no representative of New China upon it at all. There has been much coming and going since then, and the situation may be to a large extent saved, but if so it will be in spite of rather than thanks to any creative comprehension on the part of the Foreign Secretary or any member of the Labour Government.

One could multiply instances of this sort of wasted opportunity, in which the Labour Government has displayed itself as obtuse and blind as any Government could have been. Mr. Smillie, the other day, rejecting "all understandings with Liberals," declares that the Labour Party is "out to deal with root causes." But this Labour Government has never dared to be caught looking at a "root cause" yet. Take the question of birth-control. England is over-populated; it has a million unemployed; it cannot house its population decently, and it cannot educate its numerous progeny above a miserably low standard. But the Roman Catholic vote is organised against birth-control, and the Labour politicians dare not offend the Roman Catholic vote. Yet the housing problem, the unemployment problem, the organisation of education, the relations of the British Empire with other countries, the question of the necessity of war, all become absolutely different

according to whether the population of the country is considered as being stationary or expansive. But this present Labour Government does not know whether it is for birth-control or against it. It does not know anything of that sort about itself. It does not know whether it is shaping the future for a restrained or overflowing population. The Intelligenzia, in the enthusiasm of its plunge into politics, thought that the Labour Party—as distinguished from all other parties—did. And generally they are coming to realise how greatly they overrated the creative power and the creative will of Labour.

As the exhilaration consequent upon being allowed *carte blanche* to write promises for the Labour Party evaporates, the Intelligenzia will revert to its normal and proper aloofness from politicians. The Intelligenzia are the rain and the wind and sunshine of the political field, but not the field-workers of politics. To have the Intelligenzia in a party is like an elemental being married to a mortal. Elementals have magic gifts, but they are not always comfortable to live with. The Labour politicians will feel more and more masters in their own house—at least until the next election—as the critical, exacting Intelligenzia evaporate from the party.

XXXVII

Constructive ideas and their relation to current politics

17.5.24

Mr. Smillie, a little while ago, was talking of the peculiar mental virtues of the Labour Party. It was “out to deal with root causes” and so forth. There was to be no parleying with Liberals. This was immediately before Mr. Snowden produced the greatest Liberal Budget in history; something off something for everybody and no Socialist confiscation. I was moved at the time of Mr. Smillie’s speech to point out that the Labour Government had not been caught looking at the root cause of anything whatever since it came into office. It had put on its Court livery like little gentlemen, and done as it was told. That “root cause” delusion was created in the mind of Mr. Smillie by reading the election addresses of his associates.

For a time, until it got into office, the Labour Party was a magnificent hoarding for the constructive Radical. At bottom it is a party of feelings rather than ideas. It became boldly, out-spokenly Socialist. It was declared to stand for a broad collective handling of our common interests, for scientific method. It wasn’t afraid of bankers or landowners or Protection-seeking trade monopolists. It

stood for the free, high constructive future against the injustice and mean limitations of the present. It was the New Age struggling to be. But really it wasn't for all those things because it was so at heart, but because it had to say something different from all other parties, and the creative Intelligenzia prompted it. So long as it was out of office active constructive minds could do its public thinking for it. But now that the Labour Party has taken office it has come of age and become an adult political party; it has lost the wild freshness and promise of youth, and begun to act for itself. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, with his piety and his political dexterity, is extremely like a Scotch, instead of a Welsh, Lloyd George, and the array of his colleagues is revealed as the very twin brothers of the Tory and Liberal knights, local councillors, provincial mayors, and so forth we have always known. The Labour Party brought down from the cloudland of promise to performance is seen to be little more than another of the numerous Liberal parties that have appeared in the vast inchoate world of British Liberalism. It has appeared and struggled to office because Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Asquith were tiresome, obstinate egotists without an up-to-date idea between them, and because the complexity of self-conscious interests in Great Britain is too great any longer for the magnificent simplicity and "loyalties" of the old two-party system.

All this is perfectly natural and necessary. All political parties must represent the present, existing interests, existing social fears and jealousies, current delusions. No political party can represent the future, as Mr. Smillie would have us believe the Labour Party does. But it was the delusion of Karl Marx that the expropriated masses of mankind, living at a disadvantage, would necessarily realise the desirability of a more highly organised Socialist State and evolve a collective will to bring it about. This idea, through the devoted repetition of the Marxists, has infected the greater part of Socialist thought. It had manifestly infected Mr. Smillie. In so far as modern social inequalities and injustices, illuminated by modern educational influences, have brought out a steadily increasing hostility between the masses and the classes with an advantage, Marx was right, but in so far as that has involved the development of any capacity whatever to achieve a new and better order, he was wrong. The

uncomfortable masses seek uncritically for some expression of their antagonism to the lucky, the dexterous, the unscrupulous, and the far-sighted who enjoy the advantages of the existing social and economic tangle, and their suffrages and passion will go to support the particular lucky, dexterous, unscrupulous, or far-sighted politicians who seem most in harmony with the hates and hopes of the stinted, hampered, and oppressed multitude. But the antagonisms and discords of the present system are as much a part of the present as its order and its success. The Labour Party as a Labour Party is no more inherently reconstructive than the Banking Interest or the Shipping Interest. Like them, it merely wants an excessive and inconsiderate share of present power and satisfactions.

I suppose if we could set aside the entangling influences of social position and traditions we should find that men and women fell into a series between two extremes of temperamental type; the Conservatives at one end, who like things to go on very much as they are going, only to be just a little richer and sounder and sunnier, and at the other end the disturbers who like fresh things to happen and who make fresh things happen. And of the disturbers there seem to be two main types: the personal adventurers who want a series of vivid events centring upon themselves, and do not care very much how much disorder is caused by their careers, and the innovators with an instinct or a mental habit of creative service—the scientific worker, the educationist, the innovating artist, the men with a passion for industrial and financial and social organisation, who will ultimately remake the world. These types mingle in most of us, we are all something of each, but in such prominent British figures as Lord Birkenhead, Mr. Winston Churchill, or Lord Beaverbrook we seem to have almost pure adventurers, and in Mr. Sidney Webb or Mr. C. P. Trevelyan almost pure creative service innovators. But the great financial adventurers are not in politics. They are behind politics. The un-co-ordinated, inexplicit world of to-day is all for the bold acquisitive egoist; he causes wars and prevents peace, the industrialist is in his financial net, he does things to the exchange and the money in our pockets becomes worthless counters, he controls the news in our newspapers, and buys the house over our

heads and the ground under our feet. He turns up in all parties as they suit him, and his eternal antagonist, the creative service innovator, must use all parties as he can against him.

No party has a monopoly of creative ideals; the Labour Party little more than the Conservative. For consider what the great constructive ideas before the world at the present time are. There is the rescue of civilisation from the destructive pressure of unregulated births through the extension of the necessary knowledge for efficient birth-control. There is the reorganisation of educational method throughout the world to develop the habits of service and co-operation upon the lines so admirably demonstrated by Sanderson and the re-orientation of educational aims and material by making universal history the basis of the conception of a universal citizenship. There is the rescue of democracy from its hopeless suffocation under the party system, by the reduction in the size of representative bodies to efficient proportions, and the adoption of the method of proportional representation in large constituencies. Only in that way can the ordinary citizen be released from his slavery to party managers and brought into a direct personal relationship to the member his vote elects. There is the liberation of the economic life of the world from restrictive and destructive financial manipulations by the creation of a world authority for a regulated currency and the clearing of the world debt jungle. There is the lifting of the waste and weight of private profiteering and nationalist sabotage, from shipping and world transport and the staple productions of the world, through the creation of a group of world authorities for these ends. Everybody of intelligence knows that these are just possible achievements for mankind, and that the outlook for mankind is dangerous and on the whole dingy until they are attained and secured. But there is no political party in the world that dare do more in office than fumble and prevaricate about any of them.

XXXVIII

The wembley empire: an exhibition of lost opportunities

24.5.24

The preparation of a great exhibition of the glories of the British Empire at Wembley profoundly deranged the order of nature. The skies wept copiously; the English spring showed every sign of distress. The builders struck at the eleventh hour, and were only allayed by a patriotic speech by Mr. Thomas. The show opened in a state of entirely British unpreparedness, and the ceremony went chiefly to demonstrate that the development of building in concrete was a much more imposing fact in human life than the continued existence of the British Empire.

Under the circumstances it was unfortunate that the King should have reminded the assembled company of the Great Exhibition of 1851. That was opened in sunshine, and in a sunshine of hope and great ideas. It was international in design and spirit; the first of a great series of such displays. Its guiding spirit was the Prince Consort, one of the most intelligent and creative princes who have ever stood near the British throne. Heaven alone knows how deep Britain would not be wallowing in ignorance and vain delusions if it

had not been for his initiatives. He stirred the self-satisfied lethargy of Oxford and Cambridge, so that they have never really slept in peace since, and to this day the Commissioners of his Exhibition administer great funds for scientific and artistic education. The most stimulating things in that Exhibition were the displays of foreign products. They woke up England to the fact that she was falling behind technically and artistically; they caused heart-searchings and effort. But this show is a show of Empire products, "just among ourselves." We no longer want to know what the world is thinking and doing outside the ring fence of Empire. If the foreigner is being cleverer than we are in any department we do not propose to hear of it.

The King said that the aim of the Exhibition was more "modest" than that of the great show of seventy-three years ago. Was "modest" the word to use? Or "base"? Is this flat bragging that follows really modesty? It is the tune to which the whole thing goes. The London show of 1851 was Tennysonian, and Tennyson sang of the confederation of the world; Wembley in 1924 is Kiplingesque or nothing, and this is Mr. Kipling's "modest" cry to the Dominions. To set the rhyme going, and without any particular geographical reference, he informs the Dominions "the pathways are broad":

"In thy house and my house is half the world's hoard;
In thy house and my house hangs all the world's fate;
On thy house and my house lies half the world's hate."

What a combination of the spirit of grab and the spirit of panic is here! Not thus did the Hyde Park crystal palace reflect God's sunlight. Is it true of the British Empire, is it just to the British Empire, that the rhyming of this hysterical boy scout should be accepted as the expression of its deepest realities? It is at Wembley. At Wembley the British people do seem to be represented to the world in perfect good faith as the scared favourites of good fortune, keenly aware of a richly merited unpopularity, but reluctant to disgorge. So they are all g-g-going to h-hold together and not be afraid. The Exhibition, apart from a large area devoted to Coney Island amusements, where the Imperial citizen can for a time forget his imperial anxieties in vehement motion and noise, is a display of scenery and merchandise. There are, of course, one or two unclassifiable exhibits

—the Queen's delightful Dolls' House, for example—but these are in the nature of irrelevances, and a small extra admission fee emphasises the fact. The core, the reality of Wembley, is a show of natural resources and manufactured goods, for which preferential consideration is demanded on the score of a common jealousy, fear and hatred of foreign peoples.

A small pavilion does remind us, it is true, of the League of Nations to which the Empire as a whole and also in pieces belongs, but the League of Nations is far less pervasive than Australian wool or New Zealand mutton. It peeps like a little man in the back row at a football match; the salesman's shoutings drown its voice.

Now I know I am not supposed to be a very perfect patriot, but I protest that this meretricious shop-window at Wembley does no justice to the real greatness of the British people in the world's affairs. The New Zealand pavilion, for example—I quote an advertisement—"displays in the most picturesque and attractive way the wonderful charms and remarkable industrial development of this important Dominion. New Zealand is the greatest supplier to Great Britain of Dairy Produce, Mutton and Lamb, and Cross-Bred Wool—industries which have impressive representation. Her export and import trade is the greatest per capita in the world. New Zealand has the finest Mountain, Forest, Lake, and River scenery, and deer-stalking, trout and salmon fishing equal to the best in the world," and so on. But New Zealand does not exhibit Professor Gilbert Murray nor Mr. Harold Williams nor a score of other brilliant sons and daughters she has given back to the world's affairs. There is a great display of the rich and picturesque side of Indian life again, but no satisfactory representation of the very considerable work of education that must have been done in India. The British have founded Universities at Khartoum and in Mesopotamia; one looks in vain for models or schemes of them here. You may go about the Exhibition, and find butter and tallow and hides at every turn, but you will find no reproductions of the fine new public schoolhouses these rich young Dominions *must* possess, the colleges and research institutions they *must* have set going, and their magnificent arrangements for the interchange of students and ideas with India and the Homeland and the world generally.

We British cannot be such fools as to have neglected these things. But I cannot find the exhibits. Nor is there any display of the scientific and intellectual irrigation of the Press, nor of the machinery of book-publication and distribution that sustains the mental unity of the Dominions....

But I find my mind slipping away from the Wembley that is, to the dream of the Wembley that might have been. I drift off into a vision of the exhibits of work and achievement from the eighteen or twenty great Universities we have surely set up in India; the studies and reports of the two thousand students we send annually to that great land; the display of intellectual interchanges between the four or five splendid Australian Universities and Japan and China, Burmah and Siam; the achievements of the great schools of Polynesian ethnology at Sidney and Adelaide and Brisbane; the splendid educational work of Canada in China, rivalling the American effort: the joint exhibit of the United States and Canada of the scientific exploration of the Arctic and the Pacific; the vast pavilion giving a comparative treatment of the efforts of South Africa, Jamaica, and the United States to deal with the civilisation and assimilation of "colour"; the Capetown to Cairo school of African history, ethnology and economic geography. Surely these things have been seen to! We are so rich.

"*In thy house and my house is half the world's hoard.*"

But what are we doing with it? Are we just hoarding it? I thought the White Man's Burthen was a magnificent task, not a bundle of loot that he stood upon to brag about. I must have taken the wrong turning when I went to Wembley. I must go there again. I must go right on and find the turning *beyond* the ones that lead to these magnificent displays of machinery and metal and wool and grease.

XXXIX

The extinction of party government

31.5.24

The politicians of Great Britain, under the pressure of various accidental and some fundamental necessities, are being forced towards an honest democracy and efficient government. But they resist with great activity and ingenuity.

A Bill for what is called Proportional Representation, but which is really sane voting, has recently been rejected by the House of Commons by a majority of 238 to 144. It had the official support of the Liberal Party. Previously the Liberal hacks were all against it, but they have been chastened by the last two elections. The Bill went very far towards honest representative government, but in one respect it went no distance at all towards a great revolution in political method. When the time comes for its re-introduction it will be necessary to extend it or supplement it by another reducing the numbers of the representative assembly.

The urgencies of the British situation have put Great Britain far in advance of the United States in this matter. There is a very respectable movement for Proportional Representation in the United

States of America, but it has still to be realised as practical politics and a serious need by the American public. In America every citizen is born either a little Republican or else a little Democrat; it does not matter what the Republican or Democratic platform is or what sort of man is put up for him in his division, he has to vote for his party. Or else go through a crisis almost like disowning his father and mother and vote for the other party. There is nothing else in the world for him to do in politics, just as there was nothing else but being “either a little Liberal or else a little Conservative” in the great days of Gilbert and Sullivan in London. The United States is young, prosperous, and at a great advantage to the rest of the world; it may be able to afford its present travesty of democracy for a long time yet. Britain cannot. The party system has always been more rigidly organised in America than in England. In Britain on the Left side, counting Liberal, Labour, and Communist together, there are eight or ten distinct schools of political thought and intention; on the Right side there are five or six. The British voter grows more and more erratic and uncertain under the present idiotic system, and the results of General Elections more and more silly and incalculable.

The idea of Proportional Representation is now nearly a century old. It is due to a clear-headed man named Hare. He proposed that a number of candidates should stand for the whole country as one constituency. The voter would vote for the man he liked and trusted best. If that man were so widely liked and trusted that he got more votes than were needed to return him, he would take as large a fraction of every vote as he needed, and if the voter had indicated a second choice on his paper, the rest of his vote would go to the candidate next on his list. *Whatever happened, some or all of the voter’s support would go to the man he had chosen.* That man would be his man par excellence. There could be no more direct relationship between voter and representative. But if that man were a very great and desirable man, the voter could also congratulate himself on the partial possession of a second or even a third, more personal representative. There are people who profess to find great difficulty in understanding Proportional Representation; mostly this is a purely wilful and subjective befuddlement. The filling up of the voting papers is perfectly simple and the counting and fractionation

of the votes offers no difficulty to any properly instructed educated person.

For trivial reasons Hare's voting method, which would give us an almost pure representative democracy, has been modified in all the practical proposals made by the division of the country into large constituencies instead of leaving it one whole, and the assignation of a limited but still large number of members to each. But its virtue of comparative veracity in representation still to a large extent remains. Mr. Rendall's recent Bill proposed constituencies returning not less than three and not more than seven members. This is much too small for a real representation of British opinion, but it was as much as the party wire-pullers would allow. When the question is reopened this maximum should be increased.

Of course the systems called Proportional Representation in use in France and Italy are scoundrelly caricatures of the idea. Under them the voters vote not for men but for party gangs, and the whole object of Proportional Representation is to release men from servitude to party manipulation.

The objections to the measure made in the debate upon the rejected Bill were mostly very trivial or based on positive misconceptions. The question was indeed not discussed. Most of the opponents from the Labour side contented themselves with twitting the Liberal politicians with change of heart upon the question. They behaved just as the Liberal Party hacks did in 1918 because they are exactly the same sort of men. The mentality of the party hack, Liberal, Labour, or Conservative, is very much on a level in this matter. Most of the big men in all parties are for Proportional Representation, because they know they are outstanding enough to survive its establishment. The party hack knows he lives through and by his party: the voter does not choose him but suffers him, and at the first clear opportunity the voter will push him out of the way and choose a more interesting non-party man. About seventy Labour men who have at one time or another professed approval of Proportional Representation did not vote.

The struggle against Proportional Representation is really the life struggle of the professional party politician. Under Proportional Representation the legislative assembly, instead of being elected by

a small majority, or even a minority of the voters in the country, will be representative of nearly the whole country. In a constituency electing ten members, for instance, there will probably be less than a tenth of that constituency not actually represented by members returned. This wipes out every hope of a bilateral political system, because it will fill the assembly with free members, responsible only to the voters who have returned them, and practically independent of organised party support. They will necessarily be very various in their opinions.

It is not yet sufficiently realised, even by the supporters of Proportional Representation, that a country which returns men because they are distinctive and significant to its Legislature—and that is what the adoption of Proportional Representation means—will need an assembly of a different size and type from the present clumsy crowd of notables and nobodies at Westminster. There are too many members of Parliament at Westminster for efficiency, just as there are too many Congressmen at Washington. They loaf about. They do mischief in obscurity. They make trouble in order to realise their own existence. They are to public affairs what excessive fat is to the body of a man. These big legislative bodies date from a time when group psychology was not thought of. It is even possible that a big legislative body elected by Proportional Representation would be a worse evil even than the party house. Released from the party ties that control them, bunched into fluctuating groups, the scores and hundreds of unnecessary members would obstruct and confuse every legislative proposal. Proportional Representation must mean not only the suppression of the hack politician, but also the suppression of the commonplace member. For efficient government we want a Legislature no larger than is fairly representative of the broad varieties of public opinion. At the largest we need only from two hundred to three hundred members, a grand committee of the nation, appointing Ministers severally, assigning tasks to sub-committees, and expressing the general ideas of the country. We shall certainly be able to dispense with the rotation of the “ins and outs” and possibly with the organised Cabinet in such a Legislature. The adoption of Proportional Representation will be a much profounder and more revolutionary change than a mere change in

voting procedure. It will necessitate an entirely new type of representative government. In that lies its importance in the world's affairs and its fascination and desirability for most intelligent people.

XL

The serfdom of ignorance: the right of women to knowledge

7.6.24

The British Labour movement is being agitated at present by one of the most important questions in the world, the question whether a woman has a right to clear and complete knowledge about her own body and the fundamental facts of her life. It is a searching and dividing question that may very well split the party into two discordant sections. The old-fashioned politicians who haven't yet observed that women have now got votes, consider the question ought to be left outside politics. It is too real a question for the old parliamentary game. What would the grand Old Man have said about it? The Elder Spinsters of the Labour movement also rally to the protection of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald's gentility, his fine old-fashioned statesmanlike evasiveness. But the Labour Women's Conference carried a resolution against the blushingly tactful Elder Spinsters. These younger women believe that women really are responsible citizens, that democracy does mean treating adults with respect instead of concealing anything that matters most to them from them; that women ought to know what marriage means for

them and how motherhood may be undertaken or declined before diseases and children and such-like intense and overwhelming things blot out their youth and health.

The demand the younger, more intelligent women in the Labour movement are making is that knowledge should be freely, easily, and honourably accessible to all British women. It is well to get this precisely clear. No one purposes to force this knowledge upon anyone. That typical political artful dodger, Mr. Wheatley, the Labour Minister of Health, pretends obstinately that that is so. But no woman who likes to be coyly ignorant, and to be overtaken by illness and offspring before she understands anything about them, need seek such knowledge. All that the innovators ask is that it should be there available for those women who want to know what they may do and what they can do with their lives, who want to go into motherhood or refuse or delay going into motherhood with their eyes open. Personally, I think that innocence is a charm confined to immaturity, and that every adult of eighteen ought to know clearly all that is of vital importance to conduct in married life before marriage, but in this I go far beyond the modest ambitions of the advanced section of the Labour Party. They want this knowledge to be available only to the married. They want the medical men engaged at such public institutions as child-welfare centres and the like to be free—subject only to their interpretation of their professional honour—to give such information as may be asked for upon these matters. They want doctors in receipt of public money to have the same liberty of advice that every doctor feed by an upper-class woman has. They do not want poor women living in crowded homes to be obliged to bear offspring just as cows bear offspring, whether they want to or not, out of sheer ignorance and helplessness.

Mr. Wheatley says, as his excuse for refusing this liberation of knowledge, that Roman Catholic voters will object to paying rates and taxes if this sort of use is made of public money. The Roman Catholic is to decide what the poor Protestant woman shall know and do. This is a pretty impudent claim for a religion that was formerly disenfranchised. But the whole Labour Party in Parliament cringes at the thought of the Roman Catholic vote. As a matter of fact, there is nothing in sound Roman Catholic teaching to forbid the diffusion of

physiological knowledge. There is nothing, indeed, in proper Roman Catholic teaching to prohibit the practice of birth-control under any circumstances. At any time the Vatican might commend birth-control; it is not committed in the least in that respect. But a great number of priests, like our Labour Elder Spinsters, betray an extreme excitability and malignity at the thought of any sexual life that is not mainly frustrated desire. They commit the extreme sin of presumption, they invent teachings quite unsanctioned by the Church to excuse the impulses of their own troubled and unhappy thoughts. And it is of the back-street priest and not of the eternal Church that Mr. Wheatley and his Labour colleagues as pushing politicians have chiefly to think.

Now let the reader note that in this paper I have said not a word for or against the practices known as birth-control nor about anticipatory sexual hygiene. I have my own very definite opinions on these matters, but the question under discussion here is not what should or may be done, but about *what may be known*. It is the far profounder question of whether common poor people are to be treated as worthy of understanding and knowing about the things that concern their most intimate lives, or whether in the interests of cheap labour, the Roman Catholic, population statistics, army recruiting, racial jealousy, or out of regard to the unpleasant feelings and imaginations of priests and elderly spinsters, they are to be left and imprisoned in black ignorance even when they want to know. Here I find in myself a streak of surprisingly passionate democracy. I hold that every man and woman should be the conscious and instructed master of his or her own fate. It is amazing, it is dismaying, to find a Labour Minister as ready to consider the common people a breeding herd of human beasts and as ready to keep them helplessly in the dark as the extremist Tory could be. I am convinced that even as a politician he has blundered. When women fought for votes they fought for a symbol; the reality was the possession of themselves. And that is impossible without this, if not forbidden, at least impeded knowledge.

Most politicians have still to learn the significance of the women's vote. Because one or two pretty ladies on the Labour side have lost their heads, adorned themselves in trains and ostrich feathers, given

themselves over to the photographers and interviewers and succumbed to the delightful temptation of patronising the Queen, it does not follow that the mass of Labour women are not intensely sane and realist. Sexual questions are coming into politics, and they are coming to stay. Before the next election every parliamentary candidate will have to make up his mind whether he stands for knowledge or ignorance in this matter.

XLI

Blinkers for free youth: young america asks to hear and see

14.6.24

A sure way to madden Americans is to make comparisons between education in the United States and in Western Europe. Even if the comparison is flattering it leaves them mad. Apparently belief in the superior education of the American citizen is becoming as sacred as belief in the American constitution. Doubt is prohibited. Visitors to the United States may presently have to sign a form about it.

Hitherto with an extraordinary discretion I have avoided, or at least skirted, this sensitive point. I propose to continue to skirt it. There has been one exception. I touched upon the sore place a little while ago in a book called *The Dream*, and my mail from America came for some weeks bristling with an unwonted and distressing hostility. I gave an account of the elementary school teaching of England—it is much the same stuff, more or less, in most civilised countries—as I think it will appear to an observer a few centuries ahead. I added casually that on the whole the American rural school was worse than the English one I described. To the best of my knowledge and belief

it is worse. In many parts of the United States the elementary education is far below the Western European level, the consequent illiteracy is shocking, and I should not be doing my duty as a writer for the English-speaking public if I did not say so. I was not thinking so much of new districts inhabited by fresh immigrants, but of old, native-born American regions, like Kentucky. The United States is abnormally slack about its elementary education, and needs plain, stimulating speech in the matter. But the Americans are in a state of irritable self-satisfaction about their schools. They are refusing almost violently to know that their general education has not kept pace with their enormous increase in wealth and material civilisation. Morally, if not legally, I am as much a citizen of the United States of America as of the British Empire; mentally the American and British worlds are two hemispheres of one brain; I cannot think of them functioning independently, and it is just as much my business to discuss this American slackness as it is to reprove the frightful negligences of the British in respect to Indian education.

This, however, is in parenthesis. It is merely to emphasise the fact that in this article I am instituting no comparisons at all. I am taking a text from an American instance; that is all. There has been a little tiff between the undergraduates and the authorities of Harvard, and I find it extremely suggestive. The brighter of the Harvard undergraduates, represented on the governing board of the Harvard Union by Mr. Corliss Lamont, want to hear about Radicalism and Communism at first hand from people like Mr. Debs and Mr. W. Z. Foster, and the authorities are suppressing these youthful aspirations. They want the young men who will presently sway American affairs to be fed their knowledge of radical and revolutionary ideas by orthodox and respectable persons who have pre-digested it for them and removed all disturbing elements. The young men want the real stuff and to deal with it themselves. I confess myself heart and soul for these young men.

There has recently been a controversy between Mr. Bertrand Russell and President Lowell about the relative mental freedom of American and British Universities. As Mr. Bertrand Russell was turned down for pacifism from Cambridge during the war, he started in that controversy with a handicap. It seems to me that such a

dispute is bound to be ineffectual. There are cases of mental restriction and suppression from both sides of the Atlantic, and there are no scales invented yet to weigh this case against that. The real conflict here is not between American and European conditions, but between two types of men. It is a conflict that rages throughout the entire world. Everywhere one finds the managing, directive, limiting type of mind with a craving to get on to governing bodies, the industry to get on governing bodies, and a consequent tendency to get on governing bodies. Everywhere we find also a less abundant supply of critical, sceptical, creative, restless minds producing innovations and stimulating ideas and with an equal tendency to get thrown out of organisations and governing bodies. They are the seed, the ferment, the living factor in the human mind. In Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler America has produced the perfect specimen of the former class, just as in the late William James and in James Harvey Robinson she has produced excellent samples of the second. It is loudly boasted in British intellectual circles that Britain could not have produced Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, but so far as I am able to judge there is as much Nicholas Murray Butlerism in Britain as in America, as much large empty active influential pretentiousness, though it may be more diffused, and it is at least as resolute to sit upon and addle intellectual institutions.

For the peculiar evil of the governing body type is its failure to understand its lack of finality. It has no sense of the unknown, no sense of the provisional nature of all mundane things. It wants to fix knowledge in its own image, to make subsidiary and to apportion and departmentalise the work of the gifted exceptional and disturbing men. It seeks to set up classics, to perpetuate existing institutions, to inaugurate ancestor worship. Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler is to be the American Confucius and stereotype this perfect world of 1924; the last of the Founders. The coming generation will learn that at this point the world congealed. The thing this dominating type dreads supremely is revolutionary suggestion and the possibility of the young getting away with new ideas. Its educational ideal is blinkers and an obedient youth looking neither to the right nor the left, but pursuing the one right path.

But the sustaining factor of life is death. Happily, most happily, Founders die, and their codes and constitutions, their classical utterances, die and pass away. Even the inspired addresses and deliverances of Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, so beautifully printed and so relentlessly distributed, will some day shrivel and pass, and be no more heeded. So that life may go on. Without death there could be no birth. The most fundamental fact about youth is its disrespect for its elders and the past. That is what it is for. A generation that wanted to repeat the preceding generation would not be birth, it would be life stuttering. And the one thing youth does most need and want and fight to get, as its supreme instinctive duty, is and always will be every sort of destructive criticism of existing authorities, of the existing order, and of established institutions. Young America at Harvard probably has no illusions about Mr. Debs or Mr. Foster; it calls them, I am reasonably certain, “Old Debs” and “Old Foster.” But it means to hear them, it will hear them, and the college authorities had better help it to hear without any attempts whatever to jam the message Old Debs and Old Foster have to deliver against the old system young Harvard has been born to alter—and has been born for no other apparent end that I can see.

Schools and Universities are surely the most paradoxical things in the whole preposterous spectacle of human life. They exist to prepare youth for a world of enormous changes, and their chief activity seems to be, at Oxford and Cambridge quite as much as at Harvard and Yale, to get youth apart from the world and conceal the forces of change from its curious and intelligent eyes. The youth of the Universities in particular should be the living eggs of the good new things of the days to come. The efforts of the governing bodies everywhere seem to be directed chiefly to getting them hard-boiled. My congratulations to Mr. Corliss Lamont for having so far escaped the culinary process. Nowadays there are Corliss Lamonts from China to Peru. The matter and the forms change but the spirit is the same. In Moscow they have to fight as hard as anywhere else; there it is to escape being made into hard-boiled Communists. By virtue of the rebellious vitality in our youth this world of mankind lives on and does not die and freeze into a monument to its Founders.

XLII

The lawlessness of America and the way to order

21.6.24

Miss Rebecca West, that acute and brilliant observer, has recently been in America, and she has been writing her impressions of the American scene. She has been lecturing and hand-shaking, but with commendable restraint she says little of her audiences, her hotels, and her railway journeys. She has looked over the heads of her hearers and out of the carriage windows. She has looked at the great spectacle as a whole, and she generalises about it broadly and bravely.

The lack of civil order is the thing that strikes her most, and she illustrates her perception of it by a vivid and illuminating discussion of the necessity for prohibition and its consequent evils, and of the colour trouble in the South. Various previous British visitors have noted that lack in other terms, have remarked upon the want of a sense of the State in American thought, and of the reaction upon humanity of the fierce, untutored naturalness, the wide deserts, the undisciplined rivers, and spontaneous tangled forest growths of the New World.

But when she looks for the forces that will presently bring order and graciousness into this characteristically splendid display of energy at large she calls rather startlingly for peasants. She thinks, in a phrase that might have come straight from something by Chesterton, that “nameless men who plough furrows that are straight and deep,” peasants in bulk and multitude, are needed to establish a permanent social order, an enduring and developing civilisation.

America has not enough peasants. This is an interesting development, or perhaps I had better say an interesting lapse, in the ideas of a woman we had come to regard, perhaps rashly, as a boldly progressive spirit. This is turning back to the earthy romanticism of Belloc and Chesterton, and I think it shows the profoundest misapprehension of the fundamentals of the American situation. America has not developed a peasant population—for it is sheer perversity of Miss West to write as she does of Abraham Lincoln as a peasant’s son, as a traditional plough-driver, instead of an axe-wielder from the East. America, with machines to plough straighter and deeper than any clodhopper can ever do, has no need of peasants for any purpose at all, except perhaps as negro cotton-growers in the South. America is not developing a peasantry and probably never will. At present the drift to the towns is continuous, and rural depopulation is as present a problem in the United States as in Great Britain.

That Miss West should associate civil order with a peasantry shows an odd forgetfulness of European conditions. England, which has had practically no peasantry for two centuries, but only wage-earning labourers, displays the greatest social order and security in the world; Russia, which is practically all peasantry, can, and could before the war, show a lawlessness, an indiscipline and social insecurity far exceeding anything of which Miss West complains in America. I would as soon accept Zola’s valuation of the peasant in *La Terre* as Miss West’s discovery of him as the soil from which all the social virtues spring.

It is in quite another quarter that I should look for the forces that will ultimately adjust and bring together into a law-abiding social harmony all the loose and conflicting elements of the American State, and that is in a great development of schools and colleges. It

is from the head and centre and not from the base that the modern community must be unified. It is a point that Miss West seems to ignore altogether, that the United States is, in spite of the aggregatory form of its constitution, the first instance of a new type of community altogether, the type that steam railways, electrical communications, and power machinery have made possible. It may have much trouble and darkness in its destiny, but nothing but complete disaster can ever lead to another repetition of that levelling down and earthing up of the human spirit in peasant life that underlies the old-world civilisations. The chief faults and merits of American life are alike the characteristics of a released population that has escaped from that intimate servitude to pedestrian locality, to the dungheap, the patch, the hovel, and the bitter narrow outlook, for ever.

The reconstruction of human society in the great frame of these coming modern communities is the fascinating reality of political life behind the dullness and violence and unreality of personal rivalries and party issues. Its cardinal process is the establishment of a new education in terms of the common history and the common aim and a new training of everyone in service to scientifically conceived human purposes. It is an education that should not only occupy the first sixteen years of life altogether, but which should continue its informing and stimulating work throughout life. Only a few people, but it is a rapidly growing number, are beginning to realise the scale and equipment needed for this new nexus of education that will replace the old-world peasants' grubby priest by the new teachers of mankind. The educational effort that lies before the world, and more immediately before the United States as the pioneer of communal life upon a new scale, must needs be a vast and elaborate one—it is useless for the American to be content with schools about as good as European schools, or a little better, or not quite so good; they have to be reconceived in relation to the coming modern community, they have to be better and more effective, they have to be wider in range, if he is not to be thwarted of his immense opportunities of leadership in the present advance of our race towards new conditions of living. But the forces of educational development in a country work obscurely, the new beginnings are difficult to come at,

the living seed lies below the surface. It is easy enough to go to America and be entertained and astonished by the bootlegger and the “snow” dealer, to feel the chromatic emotions of “colour,” and note the drug store flaring at every street corner. These things signify about as much as the vivid spots that will sometimes appear on the face and shoulders of growing youth. But the research for educational developments is a subtle task, and it yields less florid pictures. We are badly in need of some stock-taking, English or American, of educational conditions in America.

XLIII

The shabby schools of the pious: drains and the odour of sanctity

28.6.24

One of the numerous questions which the Labour Government has to avoid most sedulously in its official egg dance is the question of the denominational school. Many of the denomination schools of England are in an advanced state of decay, most of them fall short of modern educational requirements, and the Labour Party made the amplest promises of educational progress in the electoral campaign that led it to office. Something drastic ought to be done about these denominational schools. But the present voting system, which gives the power of political decision to well-organised minorities, puts the Labour Party at the mercy of the Roman Catholic vote in a number of constituencies, the Roman Catholic community is particularly hostile to educational development, and so nothing is done. The decay of these schools proceeds.

The compromise under which these denominational schools exist was made in 1902. It was a characteristic British patch-up, and one of the most active figures in the making of it was the present Lord Cecil. Under it the schools of the various religious denominations

were incorporated in the national education scheme, and the common public was to pay the running expenses of these schools and control the general instruction. The managers appointed by the religious body concerned were, however, to appoint all the teachers and control the religious instruction, and in return for these privileges they were to provide the school buildings and keep them in good repair. If, for instance, a particular school belonged to the Mumbo Jumbo sect, which believes that the earth was created flat and has never been more than slightly bent since, that it is wrong to regard bread as nutritious and improper for men and women to speak together in public places, then the managers were empowered to discover and appoint teachers of geography, physiology, and social history whose teachings would not disturb the children in their peculiar beliefs and practices, over the heads of more efficient and less orthodox candidates. A Mumbo Jumbo “atmosphere” would be created within the school, the sexes would be segregated, bread never mentioned or mentioned with a proper horror, and all terrestrial and celestial globes, maps of the world in hemispheres, busts or portraits of Columbus, Magellan, and the like excluded. In return for these supremely important religious privileges the sect of the Mumbo-Jumboites was to pay for the upkeep of the schools and keep them up to date in their appointments.

Now it is a melancholy fact that parents belonging to the various British religious bodies concerned, parents we understood to be so passionately eager to see their children taught only their own tested and certified brand of truth that this compromise was made, have shown themselves indisposed to make any effort to pay even honestly, far less generously, for the spiritual advantages secured to them. A recent inquiry has directed attention to a very alarming state of affairs in these schools—of which altogether there are about twelve thousand in England and Wales—claiming to educate a million and a third children. A large proportion of them, we discover, have become badly decayed. They are described as “ill-ventilated, ill-lighted, with insufficient or worn-out sanitary, cloakroom, and lavatory accommodation.” “A number of schools”—I quote the Leslie report—“are noted as having been condemned by the Board of Education before the war, but as being still in full use. The complaint

is made that the Board's inspectors have ceased to mention the condition of these schools in their reports, presumably on instructions from headquarters, in the supposed interests of economy."

"'Action would have to be taken with regard to playgrounds, sanitary arrangements, etc.,' says one authority, 'had there been any prospect of the requirements being carried out,' and many others say the same in different words. In one case there has been a sinkage of ground resulting in the breakage of drain-pipes, with the result that the soil is being polluted, but the managers will do nothing. In another case the authority says that 'both teachers and children are suffering physically and educationally, but the only possible alternative would be new buildings, and the managers have no funds.'"

"General complaint is made as to the condition of the playgrounds, usually as being too small and inconvenient to begin with, and many either unusable or dangerous for want of repair. One of the counties, replying, says that out of 131 playgrounds attached to its Voluntary Schools 95 per cent. are in bad condition." ...

There is no need to extend these quotations. Enough has been cited to show the peculiar quality of a problem which sooner or later will have to be faced by the British people. The fact is now beyond dispute that the Anglican, Roman Catholic, and such other denominations as maintain these spiritually ear-marked schools, though they can be stirred indeed to energetic action at election times in defence of their grip upon local teaching, are far too indifferent to the health or education of their children to keep their buildings in a good and going state. It would seem as though they cared less about having a school than about preventing the invasion of their lives by an open and vigorous and efficient school. They hate a clean and impartial education far more than they care for one upon their own lines. They are anti-educational far more than they are religious. One might fancy the fortunate Mumbo-Jumboites rejoicing in the special opportunities they have had in the last twenty years and still possess, and saying: "Now, under the happiest conditions possible, let us demonstrate and fix and establish for ever the delightful proofs of our great doctrines. Let us show the flatness of

the earth and the inedible qualities of bread by bright and exquisite diagrams and models. Let us irradiate the place with all the happiness that the sedulous avoidance of the other sex in public can give. Let us make our schools an example to all schools with splendid buildings with new and abundant equipment, and with such teachers as only Mumbo-Jumboism can inspire." But there is not a hint of that spirit in these dismal places in which their religion has had a free hand. For two and twenty years religious denominations in England have had these twelve thousand schools upon which to demonstrate their qualities, and they have demonstrated that shabbiness, stuffiness, meanness, and low standards of performance follow upon doctrinal exclusiveness as surely as twilight leads into the night.

XLIV

The incompatibility of India: divorce or legal separation

5.7.24

Is the Anglo-Saxon fit to govern any other race?

He sprawls across the earth. He rules hundreds of millions of brown and black and buff peoples; he dominates and “protects” an even larger number than he actually governs. And there are moments when one is struck by a sense of his immense ineptitude. In many respects he is unquestionably a fine figure, but with regard to other races he is overbearing, he is unsympathetic, he is obtuse. Possibly he is exceptionally so. But it is more probable that no race is fit to have the upper hand over any other race; the possession of the upper hand leads at best to an inconsiderate self-righteousness, and at the worst to an extreme contempt, injustice, and cruelty. There are very few instances in the world of an even moderately satisfactory alien rule.

The Jesuits in South America seem to have done well in a kindly unprogressive way; the British rule in Nigeria and some of the West Indies is a comparatively bright spot in the history of racial interaction, the Maoris and the Basutos seem to be well-treated

peoples, and the Dutch are credited with a fairly happy and prosperous Java. Until the last few years the British Empire seems to have dealt justly with its old allies, the Six Nations in Canada. These are outstanding exceptions. The general rule for peace between two races seems to be mix or get away; the darkest tragedy comes when, as in the southern United States, they can neither mix nor disentangle.

In the great elaborately educated State of the future towards which human affairs are moving, everyone and every community will be most sedulously educated and trained in inter-racial good manners. Our world at present has scarcely such a thing yet as good manners in anyone or a fully educated man. All the more reason, then, for maintaining the separation of peoples unfit to associate generously and peacefully with each other, and for releasing those who are not already separated.

The recent libel case brought by Sir Michael O'Dwyer against Sir Sankaran Nair has brought out very vividly the tremendous failure of the British Imperial system, after a century of opportunity, to produce any working tradition of interaction between the British people, the British garrison, and the Indian population. It has demonstrated the impossibility of any very long continuation of British rule in the peninsula.

After one has looked into the particulars of the case, one has just the same depressing realisation of a hopeless incompatibility that one has in some matrimonial cases. It is not so much that this or that has been done or not done; it is that the two peoples are unequally yoked in temperament and intelligence; that they do not get on together; that they never will get on together while they are closely associated. The British are not good enough nor wise enough for the job; the Indians are not great enough nor patient enough. It is a case for a separation, as friendly and speedy a separation as possible, if there is not presently to be a tragic divorce.

I must confess that I cannot conjure up any very profound indignation against General Dyer. He was, I think, stupid, spasmodically violent, and unnecessarily bloody. I do not believe that the shooting at Amritsar was inevitable, and he certainly went on shooting too long. But the sort of stupid and spasmodic violence he

displayed is very characteristic of many English and many Americans. I find it in myself. I have not, luckily for myself, had General Dyer's opportunities, but it is not necessary to kill people to discover that one may be harsh and cruel when one is thwarted by mental processes one does not understand.

I had a Dyer phase, for example, as a young, eager, and untrained schoolmaster, whipping-in the difficult stragglers for class work against which they rebelled. The whole story of the Punjab troubles is really a very pitiful story not only for the native population but for the British administrators. It is the story of a conflict of resentments. One begins with an officialdom eager for "volunteers" for the Great War, unable to understand that the Great War meant nothing and should have meant nothing to any reasonable Indian person. How could it matter to them? One goes on to a story of "pressure" increasing in its ugly details until we come to thrashings, deep indignities, and tortures to stimulate the cheerful "volunteer." Pressure passes from chief to subordinate and degenerates towards cruelty at every transition; it is hard to fix responsibility at any point. It rouses resistance. The pestered and tormented populace begin to hold meetings, make vague gestures of counter violence. The irritable ass in the Anglo-Saxon make-up responds with "firmness." The firmness loads the rifles and prepares aeroplane bombs to disperse "dangerous assemblies."

There is a mood of scared obstinacy in which the Anglo-Saxon becomes capable of almost any swift atrocity. He is rarely deliberately cruel, but he is easily clumsily and hotly cruel. In the twilight the highly strung creature will shoot or lynch at very slight provocation indeed. Confronted with the dead body, his self-respect demands an adequate reason for the murder he has done. So soon as the Amritsar gardens were littered with dead and dying people, it became clear to General Dyer that a very dangerous rebellion, a second Indian Mutiny, had been heroically nipped in the bud.

His military superiors did not think so. He was rebuked and punished, very properly, very necessarily. Some amends were made to smitten and outraged India in that treatment of General Dyer, and the wretched incident of Amritsar would have passed into the receding perspectives of history if it had not been for the litigious

enterprise of Sir Michael O'Dwyer. Sir C. Sankaran Nair, in a book that was extensively used by the British Government for propaganda purposes in India, wrote phrases that certainly put an unjustifiable blame upon Sir Michael O'Dwyer for the Punjab outrages. Sir Michael brought his action and reopened the question.

Now the alarming and disconcerting thing is that the Court of King's Bench showed itself far less intelligent, far less alive to the realities of the Indian situation, than General Dyer's military superiors in India. It is impossible to read the reports of the case without realising that the mutual irritation of English and Indian, the profound temperamental incompatibility of the two worlds, was manifested in that Court in an exaggerated degree. The case transcended its proper limits and became a wrangle on the whole Punjab question. Mr. Justice McCardie took upon himself to inform the world at large and the people of India in particular, with all the weight and prestige of the High Court upon him, "speaking with due deliberation," that in his view General Dyer had been wrongly punished by the Secretary of State for India.

The case of General Dyer was not before the Court. This announcement was a lawless outbreak on the part of Justice McCardie. How much due deliberation there was in Justice McCardie's utterance and how much instinctive passion may be judged by the fact that General Dyer does not seem to have been punished by the Secretary of State for India at all; his case did not come up to the Secretary of State for India; he was punished for his hasty excessive violence by his own proper military superiors in India. Internal dissension restrained the jury from inflicting excessive and exemplary damages upon Sir C. Sankaran Nair for his careless libel; the damages awarded amounted to five hundred pounds, but it will be very difficult, it will be impossible, to persuade the sore and sensitive, quick and resentful mind of India that Britain has not gone back upon even such clumsy and insufficient apologies and atonements as she had made for Amritsar and its associated sins.

There comes a time in the relationships of nations and peoples, as in the relationships of partners and lovers and married couples, when offences become irrevocable. The breaking point seemed to have been reached by the British in India. The argument is

practically over, the negotiations at an end. When in the opening stages of the Great War Ireland was bilked of Home Rule there remained nothing for it, between Britain and Ireland, but a practical separation. Englishmen like myself, who regard the present detachment of Ireland and England as excessive and regrettable, were entangled, in spite of themselves, in that offence; and we were helpless to avert its just and logical consequences. So now with India. It is a sort of treachery to Indians to go on talking liberally to them, to seek their friendship, to attempt co-operations, with Dyer's impenitent rifles reloaded and our Justice McCardies ready and eager to tear up our poor attempts to make amends.

XLV

The spirit of fascism: is there any good in it at all?

12.7.24

During the last few weeks an extraordinary fuss has been made over the brutal murder of one of Signor Mussolini's most able and honourable opponents. Fascism has been put upon its defence. Weak but distinct sounds of disapproval have come from the more respectable sections of the Italian public. Even the London *Times* has published leading articles that seem to hint at a faint reluctant perception that the Italian dictator is remotely connected with the bloody and filthy terrorism on which his power rests.

It is, I say, an extraordinary fuss, a remarkable and almost unaccountable outbreak of the public conscience of Europe. Because it is surely a matter of common knowledge that hundreds of people have been beaten and tortured to death by the Fascisti, that innumerable outrages of a peculiarly dirty kind have been committed, that arson, wreckage, and threats are the normal expedients of Italian political life, and that the power of Mussolini has been built up upon the organisation of such violence. These things have been going on for some years in Italy. Ambitious imitators have arisen in

France and Germany and Britain. British “Crusaders” have gathered for the blessing of the Duke of York and strange young men in Oxford and Cambridge have braved misunderstanding by wearing badges bearing the challenging initials B. F. Young Italians in black shirts have even been allowed to insult the decent British dead by cocking snooks—or performing whatever the Fascist salutation is—holding out an arm and twiddling the fingers or something of that sort—at the Westminster Cenotaph. In America, however, there does not seem to be much of a Fascist movement. There has been no temptation for America, with the Ku Klux Klan in active operation and a long tradition of lynch law, to adopt the Italian model. But there have been many American expressions of sympathy with Fascism. And then in the full tide of sunny approval just one more little murder occurs—a murder not essentially different from many other Fascist murders—and the world wakes up to the infernal vileness of a thing that has been plainly before its eyes for years.

There never was so remarkable a case of the camel bearing itself bravely up to the very moment of the last straw.

To me this break back from Fascism is astonishing. I am inclined to think that Signor Mussolini found it so too. His prompt repudiation of the crime, his eager search for the body of his butchered antagonist, his sacrifice of valued cronies and close associates seem to show that his rich, emotional, rhetorical nature was very considerably scared. Nitti’s house had been burnt and Nitti driven abroad. No one had protested, except perhaps Nitti. No apology to Nitti has been made by Mussolini, and no apology, no reparation for the stupid, malicious violence shown him, is likely to be made. And now, simply because Matteotti had been more difficult to handle and had got himself rather nastily killed, this uproar! It may be some time before the dictator is really comfortable again about the matter.

I do not propose to speculate here whether the storm will blow itself out and leave Signor Mussolini still on his blood-stained pedestal doing his solemn gestures of good government before the world, or whether we are in sight of the beginning of the end of Fascism. What interests me most is the complex of motives that drives behind Fascism, Ku Klux Klanism, the British Crusaders, and all these romantic attempts to organise ultra-legal tyrannies. The

destructive instinct that gives us all a pleasure in smashing plates is plainly there, the natural malice against the unlike or the disturbing is very powerfully present, and the craving to exercise power. The stuff is in all of us, almost ineradicably so. (It betrays itself in this article.) We repress these impulses to a very large extent largely out of a fear of our fellow creatures' reprisals. But by joining a great society with high and disinterested professions of purpose we can conspire with a certain number of our fellows for a common indulgence of this malignant drive, and we can get some protection from the consequences and establish a real sense of moral justification. Many of us who would never dare to stab a negro in the street because of his offensive contrast with ourselves, or even to push him off the sidewalk if we encountered him alone, can respond to the call for his lynching with a tremulous reassurance. Many an Italian employer who would not dare to face his workers in a crisis about wages will help burn up a Labour Party office with a stout heart.

But it is claimed in the case of all these societies for intimidation and cruelty that the main motive is something higher and better than this. A state of danger, social indiscipline, and slackness is alleged; a failure of the normal processes of law and police. The cruelties and filthy outrages that are the normal activities of these organisations are declared to be the acts of strong men resolute to restore peace, justice, and confidence to a disordered world.

There is something in this plea. It is not to be too lightly dismissed. The condition of Italy before the Fascista movement crystallised out was certainly very bad. The lawlessness of Italian life existed before the Fascists and will outlive them. After the war it expressed itself in terms of Communism; robbing took the name of expropriation, and the natural resentment of human beings at uninteresting and inferior work expressed itself in entirely mischievous strikes. The manifest injustices of the social system were made the plea for a multitude of outrages that did nothing to remedy them. There have been Communist murders and Communist outrages in Italy, though nothing to parallel the extensive systematic terrorism of the Fascista régime. The difference between Communist and Fascist is mainly this, that one conspires and does mischief and cruelty to bring about

a state of order and justice that cannot exist, and the other to defend and sustain one that exists only in his imagination.

Moscow and Rome are alike in this, that they embody the rule of a minority conceited enough to believe that they have a clue to the tangled incoherencies of human life, and need only sufficiently terrorise criticism and opposition to achieve a general happiness. Violent revolution and violent reaction are two aspects of one asinine thing, violent uncritical conviction. Neither recognises the enormously tentative quality of human institutions, and the tangled and scarcely explored difficulties in the path of social reconstruction. But they feel these things they will not recognise, these tangles and possible complications, as perverse opposition, and their impatient souls rebel. Your party Communist, like your Fascist, is neither hero nor criminal; he is an ignorant, immodest, impatient fool who wants to grab the glory of inaugurating an epoch that cannot yet possibly begin. The great future of our race will owe little to either of these current nuisances. The maker of that future is the unconvenanted scientific man who works on without hurry and without delay, dissolving problem after problem in the solvent of clear knowledge, insisting on plain speech and free publication, refusing concealment, refusing to conspire and compel, respecting himself completely in his infinite respect for his fellow-men.

At the present level of education in the world, progress is like pushing one’s way through a riot. The underlying fact in all these matters is that the common uneducated man is a violent fool in social and public affairs. He can work in no way better than his quality. He has not sufficient understanding to work in any other way. If there were no Fascism there would be something else of the same sort. The hope of the world lies in a broader and altogether more powerful organisation of education. Only as that develops will the vehement self-righteous and malignant ass abate his mischief in the world.

XLVI

The race conflict: is it unavoidable?

19.7.24

The action of the United States in setting aside its gentlemanly understanding with Japan in the matter of immigration and excluding the Japanese altogether has greatly exercised the British mind. At this distance it strikes us as an altogether uncivilised thing to do. We believe that for all practical purposes the peace of the Pacific rests on the tripod, America, Britain, Japan; we attached immense importance to the Washington Agreement and the feeling of concord it developed; we abandoned the Anglo-Japanese alliance to American feeling and, after a struggle at home, the threat of the Singapore developments was withdrawn. Our dominant idea was the collaboration, mutual trust, and mutual forbearance of three great civilised Powers. Then, apparently as a move in the dismal party game that still rules American political life, in order to secure California for the Republican Party, Japan is smacked on the face good and hard, and most of this difficult and elaborate work of reassurance is undone.

It is not a question of excluding cheap labour or alien mass immigration; that has been fairly well done for some time. It is an intolerable assertion that individual educated Japanese are unfitted by race and culture for helpful participation in the high civilisation of the Pacific Coast. It implies that Japanese and Americans are for ever incompatible, are for ever two peoples; that for ever on this little planet their destinies are to be worked out parallel or apart—or to mingle only in a bitter conflict for exclusive survival.

These are immensely dangerous implications. It is impossible to believe that they express the real intelligence of the American public in this matter. But they do express a very widely diffused feeling, prevailing especially on the Pacific slope. That same reckless levity of the party politician, which in Britain in the “great days” of Gladstone and Disraeli, made the relations of Russia to Britain a mere party counter, has appealed to that feeling. We are forced to recognise that a great multitude of people in California and elsewhere are at a mental level from which it is possible to contemplate a future of pent-up races and cultures, each living in its own bit of the little planet and forcibly restrained from wandering or expanding beyond its boundaries.

Is such a future possible for mankind? It was, one must admit, a dominant idea in the past. More’s *Utopia* and most of the old Utopias were closed countries. Japan itself was a completely closed country for several centuries, and no one went into or came out of it. It was Americans who forced the closed door of Japan; they of all peoples have the least reason to complain of the Japanese spill-over into their world. But no country yet tolerates the free movement of peoples. Yet the secular force of human inventiveness fights against this system of pen and barrier.

Our States, our boundaries become intolerably small to the new methods of communication, to the broadening general intelligence. Our economic lives, in spite of tariffs and the most strenuous resistance, spread out to the ends of the earth. Financially the world is one. No peoples on the earth travel and migrate more widely, or would suffer more acutely in mind and spirit from the complete restriction of international movement than the British and Americans —the Americans even more now than the British. But we cannot go

thrusting our white faces into the markets of Timbuctoo, the bazaars of Central Asia, and the temples of Osaka, if we refuse to see brown and black and yellow in the street cars of Chicago and London. There is a plain antagonism of ideals here, between a venerable parochial and a new planetary mind. Is it not time for us to sort out our ideas in these matters a little more exactly?

Opinion lies between the absolute exclusionist and the free mixer. Most of us find ourselves somewhere intermediate between these extremes. The case of the exclusionists is based on just these increasing facilities of communication which make others think that at any cost the world must become one united system. This quicker and closer intercourse is intensifying racial clash. It was all very well when only a few foreigners could travel with difficulty to one's country, but now they come in multitudes, they come to settle, they congest in lumps too solid for assimilation. It is necessary, says the exclusionist, to make the barriers higher and stronger. Yet is this more than a temporary arrest of racial conflict in a world where finance is world-wide and every people has a need, a necessity for the produce of lands unacceptable to it? In a world, too, of increasing hygienic knowledge, in which populations tend to increase and overflow? Is it anything more than the opening phase of a development of an antagonism whose natural end is war?

It seems to me that the forces that make for material world unification, the forces of invention and enlightenment, are now so great, various and subtle that they cannot be defeated. They may be delayed, but in the end they will be stronger than any exclusionist localism. The practical question before mankind is how we are to react to these forces; and the practical alternatives are either a vast cycle of wars and race conflicts, race riots, tyrannies of secret societies, struggles for ascendancy ending perhaps after many centuries of tragedy and wasted opportunity in the complete triumph of some specific culture, or a deliberate attempt to minimise race hostility, devise fair methods of co-operation and work out a mixed and various world society with a code of mutual tolerance and service for the common good.

This is not to be done by ignoring race and racial differences; the natural thought forms, and dispositions and instinctive reactions of

northern Europeans and Jews, negroes and whites, Indians and Chinese, vary subtly and profoundly; you can no more ignore differences of race than differences of sex. They are things greatly intensified and supplemented by differences of tradition, training, and conditions, but when all such modifications are eliminated, essential differences remain. Intermarriage provides no remedy but rather a multiplication of types. But a well-directed education can at least restrain a passionate exaggeration of these differences and prevent the antagonisms that arise out of their recognition. Man is by nature a fierce resentful being of excessive desires and facile prejudices, and no society has ever existed or could ever exist without some sort of educational adaptation of this natural savage, some schooling and toning down of his hostile impulses. But the educational necessities of the small and limited past are as nothing to the educational necessities of the present time. If races are to be brought together, and not merely jumbled together or still more dangerously held apart, an educational effort has to be made on an altogether unprecedented scale.

An educational effort on an altogether unprecedented scale; that, I take it, is the only way of escape from the chancy, disorderly, restricted, and tragic life men are living now. The question of race, like every other great question in human affairs so soon as we follow it up, leads us to the school—no! it does not bring us to the school as we know it, but to the site of the school, the crying blank for a school that has yet to be. Get on with a school and college system commensurate with the enormous needs and dangers of this new age of world communication, or blunder and suffer. Teach everyone born into the world the history of mankind, the significance of racial differences, expand every individual imagination to the conception of the racial life as a great adventure, and to some sense of what it may achieve in the days to come. Replace the suspicious conservatism of ignorance by the curiosity and generosity of wide vision. These are enormous demands.

No community has yet spread more than the thinnest veneer of teaching over its whole population. But the alternative to doing so is to have the machinery and methods of the new age used to arm and intensify the passions of the old. A world no better educated than this

will never be very much better than this; it will be a world of race mobs and lynchings, of pogroms and race brigandage, of furious struggles for disputed territories, and wars and wars and wars. If they continue upon the present lines of narrow patriotism, of race pressure and race exclusion, I do not see how a war between Japan and the United States can be avoided for very many years. And until they have made a great educational effort I do not see how they can get away from their present lines of action.

XLVII

The schools of a new age: a forecast

26.7.24

In these articles I have been harping continuously on the vast disorder, the uncertainty and waste of the world spectacle to-day; and I have been clamouring for more education, for much more education, for a more strenuous and devoted educational effort.

Comments and replies, a quite copious correspondence, have brought home to me two things very plainly. One is the deep resentment aroused in many minds by the statement of what is to me an obvious fact, the littleness, imperfection and unsatisfactoriness and transitoriness of all contemporary life. Manifestly, they think Fifth Avenue in a state of traffic congestion, Ascot week, charity balls, Palm Beach, the opening of Parliament, the movie industry, and an American Presidential election are all right. Or at least right enough to live with pleasantly.

They think me a dismal and cantankerous hunks for wanting, as I seem to them to do, to shatter and reconstruct a world which sustains such delightful things. They do not realise that this world is being shattered anyhow, and will not be reconstructed by any

automatic process. They want this world left as it is and not “messed about with” by innovating people. They have a will to be satisfied, an obstinate will for contentment. Mixed up with that, and probably fundamental to it, is a profound disbelief in the power of men wilfully to alter their conditions and determine their collective fate.

Now if I have any claim to distinction among journalists it is that I do not share that widespread scepticism and fatalism. I do not let the fact that some of us, myself included, are having an undeservedly good time hide the fact that the system, such as it is, is wasteful, that it cripples the possibilities of nearly everyone, and is, to millions of people, actively distressful and cruel.

I belong to a small but growing minority which believes that man has come to such a phase of knowledge and power that he is already able and may very soon be willing to put a bit between the teeth of the monster of wild change that is now trampling this world. We believe that human society could be and presently will be deliberately reconstructed more boldly, more elaborately, and with more definite intention, upon a scale commensurate with the greatness of modern mechanism and to an extent that will enable it to anticipate and discipline what are now the incalculable forces of change. And our faith is that the way to this expansion of life, this release from chance, lies through Universities and schools, through a universal education of the entire population of the world and through a universal and sustained thought process keeping pace with ever-changing necessities.

We are all democratic Socialists in so far as we regard it as the general concern to maintain order and law, to secure the common needs of everyone by carrying on the exploitation of natural wealth and the production and distribution of staple necessities for the universal and not for particular profit, and to provide education and health services for all; but we are aristocratic individualists in demanding world-wide freedom of movement for all, the utmost scope for self-realisation, and the freest utterance and hearing for every creative and innovating spirit—for everyone indeed who may possibly be creative. We see, as the only way to the sort of human life we desire, an immense development of the reorganisation of

every sort of research and of the whole educational system of the world.

A rough parallelism of things mechanical and things mental will put the case as we see it. In the last two centuries the means of transport has developed from the stage coach and sailing ship to the automobile, express train, great liner, and aeroplane; there has been much more than a tenfold increase in speed and a corresponding increase in security, versatility, and comfort. Our mechanical power and mechanical productivity have increased in far greater proportion. There has been an educational advance also, but it has not kept pace with this. More people in the country are educated now, certain elements of education, reading and writing, have been spread very widely, but the education of a fully educated man is not conspicuously better than it was two hundred years ago, and education has not spread, as railways and factories have spread from the Atlantic countries, all over the earth.

We believe that we are now in the dawn of a phase of educational thrust, corresponding to the mechanical thrust of a century ago. That former thrust redistributed the population of every country it affected, created new towns, altered the build and lay-out of every town it touched, created new suburban systems, and revolutionised the visible aspect of life. The new thrust will reconstruct the scattered and confused mental life of the age, will create mental nuclei everywhere, link up the whole countryside to new and more powerful mental centres. I doubt whether at present, apart from school children, one person in a hundred in either Europe or America could be described as a mental worker; we foretell a time when something like one in eight or one in five will be definitely employed in work that is primarily mental, either as student, as teacher, as scientific investigator, as artist or writer.

In every village there will be a school, a reading-room, a theatre, closely associated with the health service and recreation of the place. It will be the central architectural fact of the place, the group of buildings about which the homes will cluster. In every town there will be the district schools and the great high school, the art studios, the theatres, the laboratories. Every considerable town will have a University as its chief expression and its crowning glory. The

agricultural and industrial life of the land will be closely linked to the technical research of the colleges; they will go thither for advice and direction. The business and financial system will no longer be secret and private, a system of competitive conspiracies, but it will be working in close touch with the general scientific life; the banker will be a professor of economics, the iron-master will be a metallurgist. That is the order of the world we desire, and which we foresee through our hopes. That is the world that will replace the system of stampedes, scrambles, riots, and traffic jams in which we live to-day.

XLVIII

The impudence of flags: our power resources and my elephants, whales, and gorillas

2.8.24

The British Empire Exhibition at Wembley is open to all sorts of criticism, and is occasionally quite absurd, but it contrives to be entertaining. Many of us dislike the Kipling quality and the strong, unpleasant flavour of Imperial Preference that hang about it. I have reviled its commercialism; its relative disregard of educational duties and responsibilities; its suggestion of imperial self-sufficiency. But all sorts of conferences are meeting at Wembley, and occasionally a strong breath of human common sense dispels for a time the stuffy, foggy conceit of our recent and transitory Empire. Wembley, in spite of itself, becomes international and contributes to the project of a new world.

The British Electrical and Associated Trades have been holding a most enlightening and hopeful conference on the power resources of the world—not of the Empire, be it noted, but of the world. Prominent among the speakers at the opening were the secretary of the United

States Federal Power Commission, the president of the Italian Electrical Committee, and other “outsiders.” A real attempt to see the world as one economic whole has been made. A frank admission of the need for organised world unity and world co-operation underlies the activities of this particular gathering.

The President of the Conference was the Prince of Wales. He made a very remarkable speech. Three or four years ago I made a number of people extremely indignant by criticising the world tour of the Prince. I complained that his speeches and proceedings seemed to ignore the world situation and to intensify the imperialist egotism of the narrower sort of English throughout the world. He did seem to me then to be behaving as so many Army and Indian Civil Service people and so forth still behave, as if the British Empire was a clique of Anglican communities aloof from the common interests of mankind.

Quite a number of worthy persons seemed to think that a typical common Englishman like myself had no right to pass a judgment upon a young man, a quarter of a century his junior, simply because that young man happened to be the Heir Apparent. They wanted him to be treated as divine, above politics. But that sort of thing is not in the English tradition. The British Royal Family is not divine; it cannot keep out of politics if it is to function at all, because it has constantly to speak and act for the Empire as a whole; and it is a matter of very great importance that the Prince should show himself as he has now shown himself, growing in political wisdom and sensible of the wider vision of human unity that opens before mankind. Here, for example, is a sentence from his speech in which he sinks the Prince altogether, lost in that much nobler thing, the creative citizen of the world:

“Finance, science and research are universal, but the utilisation of the results derived from these activities is not universal, and in this disparity lies one of the greatest obstacles to progress.”

And again: “You have before you, in the reports submitted to the World Power Conference, the raw material for a survey of the power resources of the world; you can now explore many countries which have hitherto been veiled in mystery, and assess at their true value the possibilities of an immense industrial development in many of

them; you may, from this material, erect the structure which will go beyond the confines of one country, or group of countries, and include all those parts of the world where man can hope to prosper. International co-operation may emerge from the realm of the ideal into the realm of practical utilisation as the result of your deliberations, and I sincerely trust that full success will attend them."

I doubt if any royal personage has ever so distinctly repudiated that narrow particularism to the realm, to which royalty is supposed to be distinctly pledged. This is hoisting the flag of the world-State over all the Imperial flags that wave from the Wembley buildings as plainly and frankly as, considering all things, it can be done—at Wembley.

In very many ways the last half-year has been a year of mental and moral recovery in Europe. A year ago, when one wrote of nationalism as a dangerous and dividing sentiment, of national sovereignty as a nuisance, of the pre-emption of this or that area of the world's surface and of this or that supply of necessary national material in the interests of the exploiters under this or that flag as a method of crippling and wasting the whole economic life of mankind, one felt that one was writing and thinking in an almost hopeless minority. All the world seemed to have gone nationalist and exclusive. One felt one shouted to an entirely inattentive preoccupied crowd under a stormy sky against which nothing was bright but the national and Imperial flags. Flags were supreme. Now it is as if the sun of reason shone everywhere, and the sundering flags visibly droop in that sunlight.

There are moments when it would seem that after all man is a reasonable creature. The accumulation of considerations that is now plainly driving men, in spite of ancient traditions and prejudices, towards an organised cosmopolitanism is very great. These considerations come in on us from all sides. While one is refusing to be anything but an isolated patriot on this count, one is being undermined almost unawares upon another. Many of us who will hear of no super-Government to save us from war, nor of any properly equipped and provided super-Court to settle international disputes, find ourselves presently confronted by the problem of epidemics and consenting to the idea of supernational controls from

the health point of view. The postal union, which the Great War strained but has not destroyed, is after all only the thin framework of a much more comprehensive union of communications. When I read the speech of the Prince of Wales at the World Power Conference I was at once reminded of the preachings and efforts of that wonderful old man, David Lubin, the Israelite who set up the International Institute of Agriculture. The chief objective of this "Institute" was a contemporary survey with a view to a proper distribution of the world's staple productions. Shortages were to be anticipated and headed off; over-production was to be restrained. And arising out of this main idea was Lubin's secondary project, the placing of all the shipping of the world and all the great international railway lines—he lived before air transport seemed a probability—under one world authority which would fix freights as we fix postal charges. This Power Conference has been talking pure Lubinism about the world distribution of power.

I suppose it is because I had a biological training that I find one of the most attractive arguments for world unity, and the suppression of flag-worship, in the need of protecting whales from ourselves and ourselves from bacteria. The dwindling world fauna of this planet is in urgent need of international game laws and a supernational game-keeper. Species of whales are being exterminated because the ocean is no man's land, and if one State restrains its whalers from excessive wasteful slaughter they can shelter their activities beneath some less scrupulous flag. Diseases cannot be stamped out of the world by systematic sanitation while one affected Power sees fit to exercise its sovereign right to remain filthy. And any species of birds or beasts that lives under a careless flag may be exterminated by the sportsman and no one have a right to protest. The gorilla, they say, is going fast, and the African elephant. These marvels of life, these strange and wonderful beings of whose vitality and impulses we know so little, are being killed because they are insufficiently protected. Their chief slaughterers are patriotic collectors, and the fewer the survivors the hotter is the competition for specimens to adorn their beastly national collections. Yet the gorilla belongs not to the flag that claims its habitat but to all mankind. It belongs to me, to any man in Canada or in Texas, as much as it does to any West

African or any Belgian. But there is no world control to protect these grotesque and marvellous creatures for us and for our children's children. They will go—one more vivid item in the vast wastage of animal, vegetable and mineral wealth that the scrambling insufficiency of mere flag rule involves. For them and for a thousand vital treasures the world government may come too late. Yet that it is coming rapidly and surely, the words and the spirit of the discourse of the Prince of Wales, in that very temple of British Imperial exclusiveness, the Wembley Empire Exhibition, bear witness. Wembley was to have inaugurated Imperial Preference, but it is really Imperial Preference lying in state. I wonder how many years it will be before we have a World Exhibition to bring home to us the need for free trade, free speech, and free movement everywhere under unified world controls.

XLIX

Has communism a future? the possibility of a socialist renascence

9.8.24

I have a real affection for Communists—and a temperate admiration. It is the sort of love that leaps forward to chasten. In a world of oafish self-complacencies set in a morass of dull submission to the chances of life it is a consolation and refreshment to find any people who realise the self-destructiveness of the present system and, however vaguely, the possibility of remaking human society upon richer and happier lines. The value of the Communist Party as an organised ferment is very high. I should like to see a properly accredited representative of the party free to air his opinions in every high school and college—particularly in the United States. Everybody in the place would be the brighter and better for his beneficent irritation.

The House of Lords entertains its leisure by passing Bills to suppress Communist Sunday Schools, and the Archbishop of Canterbury speaks in tones of horror of the teachings in these establishments. Nothing could witness more effectively to the wholesome mental stir these schools create. Most of the teaching in

Anglican Sunday Schools is equally repulsive to me, but so long as they do not raid the public funds for their support I do not see why they should not teach what they like. I am English, not Anglican. My blood and traditions incline me to the utmost free speech and free teaching and free propaganda for everyone. No one is obliged to send his children to a Communist School, and I do not see why the half truth of Anglicanism should not have to face the half truth of Communism. The founder of Christianity talked a lot of Communism, but I cannot recall a solitary phrase of His to justify the existence of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Yet at the same time I am doubtful whether there is much of a future for the Communist Party. I doubt whether in twenty-five years' time there will be many Communists, under that name, below middle-age. A few nice, fierce old gentlemen will survive in smoking-rooms and cafés. The Communist movement is a part of the present world, it is a shadow cast by existing economic absurdities, it is a current reaction. In five-and-twenty years' time the projects of a scientific Socialism will have converted and absorbed most of the youthful enthusiasm and resentful energy that now finds its expression in Communism. Communism is a phase, a bitter and sterile experiment, in the development of the Socialist idea. Socialism is its parent and its heir. The movement for the organised exploitation of the whole world in the collective interest existed before the Communist Party, and will be going on long after that party is a quaint tradition.

At present the Communist Party still dominates the government of Russia. But it does so at the sacrifice of all its constructive claims. In seven years the Russian experiment has demonstrated the intellectual sterility of the movement beyond any further dispute.

The Bolshevik Government came to power in a state of ignorant confidence, treating criticisms as a blasphemous reflection on its omniscience, insulting and persecuting every sort of Socialist outside its trained and disciplined ranks. The Government took over factories, uncertain whether it meant to run them under a quasi-military discipline or on guild lines as free communities of workers; it "smashed" money, and discovered it had no other way of computing the mutual services and obligations of men. It was touching to see

Lenin in the Kremlin in 1920 struggling with childish projects for the "electrification of Russia" and unable to explain what sort of town centre, if any, his Communist Russia would possess. He had no working ideas that were worth a rap about this very obvious matter. I left him, sympathetic with him in the face of his stupendous task, but a little amazed at his extreme unpreparedness. However, if one may trust a virulent article by Trotsky that has just been published in English, he lost his temper in true Communist fashion at being asked awkward questions and resorted to Trotsky for comfort. "Ugh!" said Lenin. "*What* a perfect petit bourgeois!" and so restored the mental calm my entirely respectful scepticism had ruffled. For in Communist circles if you can call anyone or anything "bourgeois," the question is settled and discussion is at an end.

The emptiness of plan, the extreme assurance, which distinguishes modern Communism is the secret alike of its attractiveness in times of social trouble and its futility in constructive effort. It does not worry the oppressed, the discontented, and the unhappy with difficult projects for human readjustment. It lumps together the complex and various disorders of social life, the muddle of human prejudices and impulses, as one malignant thing, the "Capitalist system." Destroy this legendary monster and the Millennium will ensue. Instead of overcoming the fool in Everyman, you must obstruct, waste, sabotage all the current services of the community. Having convinced the world that nothing else will work, the dictatorship of the party will ensue. There could be no teaching more successful in a mass meeting and less useful in a bureau. It gives all the excitement and release of a revolution with none of its tiresome responsibilities.

It was Marx who created modern Communism. It is the sterile mule of Socialism and a scientific ambition. Socialism from the days of Robert Owen onward was a thing of schemes and projects. It was perpetually seeking better arrangements. Its methods were Utopian. But Marx was bitten by an ambition to rival Darwin; he was to be the Darwin of social and political science, with none of Darwin's modesty or Darwin's intellectual patience. He had the mind of a theologian with the pretension of a scientific inquirer, and he had the dull man's hatred and contempt for the human imagination. His movement was

to be “scientific” with all the magic that word carried half a century ago. There was to be nothing imaginative and no confounded ideals. It was all to be fatalistic. It was never going to plan what would happen because it was going to know what would happen. He and his associates produced a very sound and ample analysis of the processes of decay in the business life of the time, but with such ambitions and such repudiations they could produce no scheme of any replacement system. They have no scheme to this day. Even Russia has not taught the Communist the practical need of Utopias.

At a certain level of intelligence party Communism is a very attractive teaching indeed. Its self-assurance is very reassuring. Any human being not absolutely stupid hates to be robbed of freedom and educational opportunity before thirteen or fourteen and thrust into uncongenial and hopeless toil. Most employment is bitter for young people. At the same time people whose education is truncated so soon usually fail to develop sufficient intellectual power to understand complex industrial and financial processes. They develop an inferiority complex about such things that clamours in them for comfort.

Communism embodies that hate and provides that comfort. It points to the “Capitalist” as the oppressor and claims to furnish in a few phrases all that needs to be known. In a social system that educated everyone to sixteen or eighteen and then gave a fair wide choice of public service there would be none of that hate and that defensive aggressiveness, that suppressed suspicion of ignorance and inefficiency that makes Communist controversy so loud and rude, which has made Mr. Trotsky so loud and rude. The marshes in which the cantankerous spirit of Communism grows would be drained and evaporated. By the theory of Marx it was in the highly developed industrial system of Western Europe, and particularly in Great Britain, that the Communist Revolution would first occur. The disconcerting fact for Communists is that it occurred in Russia, where the industrial organisation was at a low level and there were eighty per cent. of illiterates. In Great Britain nobody except the enterprising people who want to raise money from imbecile dukes and rich old ladies even pretends to be afraid of a Communist Revolution.

There is a considerable dread of Communist activities in America. That is very largely due to an uneasy conscience, aware of a great mass of unassimilated immigrant labour very unfairly treated and very inadequately educated. There may be some grounds for such apprehensions; I will confess I do not think the present schools and colleges of America good enough and strong enough for the constructive work they ought to do. There may be a future for Communism there, and there will probably be a big movement towards Communism in the industrial centres of India and China and Japan. But in Europe I think that the Communist drive has passed its maximum and that the popular mind is moving onward to a more constructive and hopeful type of Socialism.

Just as art in a phase of extreme sterility escaped by going back behind Raphael and starting afresh from the Pre-Raphaelite phase, so I think Socialism will soon be getting behind the unfortunate misdirection of Marx and Engels to become once more Utopian and fruitful.

L

The little house: as it was, is now, and apparently ever will be

16.8.24

What a very odd spectacle the British Parliament face to face with the housing problem is! On the strength of that issue alone I should imagine that any really civilised judgment would condemn the poor old institution at once and set about a revolutionary search for a better constructed instrument of government.

There is a shortage of housing accommodation in Great Britain; the picturesque, creeper-clad country cottage is too often a cramped, decivilising, insanitary fraud, and most of the industrial population lives in slums worse than the corresponding slums in America and little better than those on the Continent of Europe. You cannot get a house or flat in which a civilised family can live for much less than a hundred pounds a year rent, and most of those available at that price are stereotyped and dull-looking, and sometimes detestably ugly. Below that level comes a descending series of inconvenient, unsound, and unpleasant lodgments for the mass of the population. The Labour Ministry of Health has been making large encouraging gestures of help, it has projected big and complicated bargains with

the building trades and the building trades unions that may—if all goes well—provide at an immense cost on a quasi-charity basis, at the public expense, a sufficiency of houses for the poorer sort of people of fifty years hence, according to the ideas of comfort and decency prevailing fifty years ago.

The Government and the local authorities are to pay about half the cost of building a multitude of houses, the assistance being given on the sole condition that they fall below a certain standard of size and comfort, and the industrial employer will be able to pay low wages in proportion to the cheapness attained. In other words, the Labour Government is doing a deal with the building trade in the interest of the low-grade employer and is putting British industry “on the rates.” They are returning by a circuitous route to the condition of things in England before the New Poor Law, when farmers grew rich by employing labour in receipt of outdoor relief, at otherwise impossibly low wages.

The most striking thing about these housing proposals is the tacit acceptance by all parties in Parliament that the population of the coming years must be put away, each family in a little separate house of its own. If anything was needed to prove that the Socialism of the Labour Party was merely skin deep and its creative intentions an electioneering bid, it would be this. If one thing is clearer than another in the outlook of the modern community, it is the impossibility of the small separate house. It is a cage of needless toil for women; it is a place of deprivation and hardship for children. The whole drift of things is in favour of the highly organised block building containing a great number of houses. In this there can be electric light, radiators, a supply of hot and cold water, efficient sanitary accommodation, group wash-houses, adequate cupboards, and convenient shopping facilities, all provided at a less cost than is needed for the same number of scattered low-grade homes, each under its separate roof, with lamps to clean, fires to light, water to boil, and every possible demand for feminine drudgery and servitude.

In their dreams people think of Mr. Wheatley’s projected houses as little flower-girdled cottages, each with a bright little garden and a drying-ground and an uncontrolled multitude of children playing in

the sun; in reality we shall get rows and rows of mean little boxes on the outskirts of our towns, jammed together into slums, each fouling the air with a separate chimney, and remote from every modern amenity.

At present a large part of the population of East London lives in small houses of two stories, or two stories and a basement. Idiotic foreign visitors surveying this from train windows remark on the Englishman's superb individualism, so that every man's house is his castle. In the East End no man's house is his castle; every floor, and often every room, is a separate household, and sometimes these households entertain lodgers. This state of affairs the new Labour legislation will extend and perpetuate. Yet plans have been made that show beyond dispute that the whole population of industrial London could be rehoused in fine and handsome apartment buildings, with night and day lifts, roof-gardens, and nearly all the light, air, and conveniences to be found in a Kensington flat, at hardly greater cost than would be needed to choke all the ways out of London with a corresponding spread of Wheatley hovels, and so great an amount of space could be saved by doing so that half that area of London could be made into a playground and garden.

But even to entertain schemes of that sort requires imagination, and the new Labour Government has shown itself the least imaginative of Governments. It has excreted or suppressed all its creative elements. It is a class-Government, and it embodies the subdued mind of the common wages-earner. Whatever is, it accepts, from Court costume to slums. Its idea of life is the life of the back street in which it has always lived, and it wants more back streets and cheaper back streets to live in, with an occasional treat in the garden of Buckingham Palace. In dealing with housing, just as in dealing with mines or with transport, it shows itself incapable of any breadth or power of initiative.

One of the most remarkable aspects of this housing legislation is the ineffectiveness of the women. When women were struggling for the vote the world was given to understand that their success would be an end to "man-made laws" and "man-made" ways of living. There was to be an astonishing release of the sensible, practical feminine mind. Well, here is a question that concerns women

primarily. A very large proportion of the girls and women of to-day, before their lives are out, will have to live either in the slums that the Labour Government is failing to reorganise, or in the rows and clumps of boxes of brick or timber that are to be spread out over the outskirts of every centre of population. There was nothing to prevent the distinguished women of the Labour Party from giving these men who are framing-up these schemes to build pauper houses and endow the building trade at the public expense a lead towards better things. These houses of the Wheatley project mean an effectual subjugation of great multitudes of women to dingy drudgery for scores of years to come; they mean the growth of a new generation of children with miserable standards of comfort and freedom. But so far we have had no guidance from intelligent women at all, but only speeches from such mere party supporters as Dr. Marion Phillips sustaining the preposterous pretensions of Mr. Wheatley. The Women's Housing Councils' National Federation, with its resolutions for the glorification of Mr. Wheatley's building ramp, does no more than emphasise the general feminine apathy. Generally, the women of the country seem not to be awake to the manner in which this business concerns them.

Only one exception occurs to me at the present moment in the widespread indifference of intelligent and influential women to the comfort and outlook of the mass of their sex, and that is Mrs. Leonora Eyles, the novelist. Her book, *The Woman in the Little House*, is a most intelligent, sympathetic, and illuminating account of what it means to live in just such little houses as Mr. Wheatley and his friends, the employers and employed of the building trade, are conspiring to stereotype. She describes not slum life but the life of an ordinary working man's wife in London, without exaggeration and without extenuation. It is a picture of extreme dinginess and meanness, relieved only by the pluck and devotion and hopefulness and cheerful humour that enable these people to hang on and hope for better things. It is this sort of life the Wheatley legislation proposes to extend and perpetuate, because in Britain, as everywhere in the world, political life is divorced from the creative imagination, and because the mass of common men and women in the world do not know how much they may reasonably ask for from

those who have access to the science and control of the resources of the world.

LI

The triviality of democracy and the feminine influence in politics

23.8.24

The other day I was discussing the political outlook in Great Britain with a very close and shrewd observer of political motives. I live very much in a dream of a saner world and he lives in active reaction to the passing hour, but we both knew most of the leading figures in public affairs and we were surveying the present extraordinary fragmentation of parties in Parliament—for even the Labour Party now is hardly on speaking terms with itself and has nothing but office to hold it together. His thoughts ran much more on personalities than mine did. Was Mr. Asquith played out? Would Lloyd George “come back”? What was the future of Lord Birkenhead? Would Mr. Baldwin ever be brighter and better? Was Mr. Masterman the resuscitated hope of the Liberal Party? Was there anyone of any promise at all in the Labour Party? And so on.

Unlike my friend, I do not go about culling incompatible posies of politicians. I have no interest in gathering together a marketable bunch. The failure of party government, the dissolution of all British parties, cheers and pleases me. Great Britain, I said, would have to

lead the way to a new stage of democratic government and get itself a Legislature of a more manageable size, elected by Proportional Representation.

"They won't," said my friend, meaning by "they" our bright-eyed millions of voters. "They can't grasp ideas like that—new, *difficult* ideas. It takes ten minutes' attention to understand Proportional Representation. You can't go to the country with a thing like that."

"But unless we get a more efficient Legislature, how can we tackle our difficulties with money, with Europe, with India?"

"We don't tackle difficulties," said my friend; "Parliaments can't."

"Most of the Labour Party promised to support Proportional Representation at the last election."

"And ran away from it. There was a tuppenny-ha'penny advantage in cheating on that, so of course they cheated. They'll run away from everything except office. They're just a lot of poor things who've spent too much money on Court clothes and in dressing up their wives and daughters fit and proper for the Garden Parties, and they want to get the wear out of it all before they go back into the shadows. Nobody in Parliament who isn't conspicuous is going to let Parliament be altered so that it excludes second-rate people. It's against nature. You might as soon expect Congress to scrap the American Constitution. You'll never live to see a General Election in England or America that isn't fought on thoroughly silly lines—on the old electoral method."

"But think of the tasks that lie before the world!"

"What's the good of thinking of them?" asked my friend. "It only worries you."

"There has to be an organisation of international affairs to prevent war, there has to be disarmament with security, world transport at standard charges, the re-establishment of a workable world currency, the development of education throughout the world——"

"Things like that aren't going to be done by Parliament," said my friend. "They may be done behind the backs of the politicians—if there are interests and intelligences big enough to want them and organise them, but——Have you ever met the average voter?"

"I know, I suppose, as many people as you do."

"But your head's in the clouds...."

My friend paused, and then remarked with malignant satisfaction, “The next big question for England is Prohibition.”

“But it’s such a secondary matter!”

“Exactly. That’s why it’s going to be primary. It’s trivial enough for a democracy to be really earnest about it. Take international settlements and war possibilities; these are infinitely more important things, I grant you. But what does the average voter know about them? There are possibilities of enslavement, of blood and death, of millions of the silly rabbits being scared and starved and mutilated and killed in international conflicts. But these voters of yours can’t grasp the complexity of that. They want peace, of course, but they don’t know what makes peace. So everybody puts peace on the party platform, peace and the League of Nations, or peace and conscription, ‘be prepared,’ or peace and isolation, peace and the dear old flag. It doesn’t matter. The poor mutts can’t grasp it at all. Talk of that kind of thing, argument about that kind of thing, only confuses and wearies them. It doesn’t count in politics. And then there’s currency and finance. Even the bankers don’t understand that—and most of them don’t want to. Prices go up and down and credit expands and contracts and the rabbits get suddenly well off and full of conceit, or they get out-of-work and starved and driven to suicide, but it’s all quite beyond them how it happens, and it gives them a headache and a vicious temper even to try to understand. Obviously they don’t know and obviously therefore they ought to be concerned for knowledge, but what is obvious to you or me isn’t obvious to them. What is the vote-catching value of spending money on scientific and social and political research? What is the vote-catching value of raising the school age to sixteen? That only makes the grown-up voter jealous of the next generation.

“But Prohibition, shutting the public-house round the corner, every man and woman understands that, and the women will vote for it anyhow, blind to every other consideration. That is something they can understand, and the peace of the world, the volume of trade, and economic justice may go hang so long as son and husband can be shut and barred from the drink. Interference with the personal habits of other people is innate in women; they acquire it as sisters, wives, and mothers. The enfranchisement of women was the last

step in the devotion of democracy to futility. It ended the last possibilities of constructive legislation and inaugurated the age of restraint."

He went on to sketch the growth of the Prohibition movement in England; the drift of politicians towards a defined attitude in the matter; the way in which the question could be used to thrust aside wider and more abstract issues. "Watch the speeches of Lloyd George," he said. "Watch the speeches of the pushing young men. They are nearer to it than you are. They know." So-and-so said this yesterday, and So-and-so said that last week.

He produced an effect of being detestably right about his facts. He said that making Prohibition a part of the American Constitution was the silliest thing in history; one might hold the extremest temperance views and still understand that a matter of personal health and conduct should have no part in the fundamental laws of a State. But the American citizen had lost any idea of what a constitution was. Presently the American woman might put a morning bath in the constitution, or the weekly weighing of babies or the universal use of tooth-brushes. Or they might require every married man and woman to carry his or her marriage lines conspicuously displayed upon the person, like the bright little licence on an English motor-car. These were the things they held important. England was going the same way, following a few years behind America, because it was a country of more deeply established disciplines and diffidences, but I might rest assured it would get to the same end. In twenty years' time there would be no politics left in Parliament but the politics of scandal and minor moralities, and the big things of human life would be managed in some other fashion.

Thus my friend, and I found it very difficult to gainsay him.

LII

Sex antagonism: an unavoidable and increasing factor in modern life

30.8.24

I have been reading a book called *Ancilla's Share*; it professes to be an indictment of Sex Antagonism, but indeed it is an artless demonstration of it. It was first published as anonymous, but then came paragraphs ascribing it to Miss Elizabeth Robins. Now I gather she admits her authorship. I find little of her fine gloomy talent in it. Possibly she is only partly responsible.

It is under a confusing number of heads a tirade against the hostility of man to woman. Instances from all the ages jostle one another. Men do not even give women fair literary criticism, and this point is rather stressed. Mr. Birrell disliked the work of Hannah More; Mr. Max Beerbohm, in a delightful and probably untruthful sketch, says he cut up and burnt a work by some woman novelist unnamed. But I doubt if strong sexual feeling underlay either offence. It happened to be a woman novelist. But Mr. Max Beerbohm has been distinctly unflattering to various men contemporaries, and I doubt if

Mr. Birrell would wallow in praise of Herbert Spencer. It happens that I have annotated several of the works of Professor Nicholas Murray Butler in a disparaging spirit; marginal illustrations are my weakness; and I have been at great pains to destroy by fire a large nobly printed card, very thick and strong and stylish, exhibiting one of his aphorisms. It was sent me by some American admirer we evidently share between us; it was probably intended to dominate my bedroom or study; and it found a useful rôle at last, charred but invincible—for fire recoiled from it—as packing for a picture. I suppose these facts would win me a place side by side with Mr. Birrell and Mr. Max Beerbohm in a revised edition of *Ancilla's Share*. As it is they merely prove that we all have our literary dislikes. I don't think Jane Austen has any case against men for lack of appreciation. I don't think that any writing woman of Miss Robins's generation can complain of anything in her reception by male critics, except perhaps a too eager welcome.

But I will not embark upon any detailed treatment of the confused riot of assertions against men in this book. Need one even pretend to take seriously Miss Robins's proposition that women would have managed the world better than men have done, that they would have prevented the world war and arrested the financial disorganisation of Europe? This talk of Ancilla's tremendous nobility in the political field is sheer nonsense. So far the enfranchisement of women in Britain and America has had a confusing and belittling influence upon politics. It was the women's influence in politics which achieved the crowning silliness of making Prohibition a part of the constitution of the United States, and in England women have done nothing to save the face of the countryside from Mr. Wheatley's dismal women-enslaving house pustules. The drive for better education is no stronger than it was before our sisters had the vote; the drive for more scientific research is perceptibly feebler. Disarmament is manifestly a question of minor importance to women. Nevertheless this book proves by its temper what it fails to prove by its arguments, that sex antagonism is a fact of very great and increasing importance in our world.

Miss Robins thinks she is at war with men; she is really at war with sex. She wants to have men restrained, reproached, and incessantly

scolded for things for which they are no more responsible than girls in a nunnery. Women dress extravagantly, paint their faces, brighten their eyes, wear high heels, disregard serious for trivial effective interests. It is the men, she says, who make them do it. It is not. It is the presence of men in the world which leads to these exaggerations and intensifications of sexual attraction; but that is a different matter altogether. If all men were reduced to a helot class, there would still be magnificent dresses and extreme physical display by women. And men do not welcome women as a sort of neutral competitors in their fields of work, because sex imposes a different attitude upon them. Sex is mentally as important, if not more important, to a normal man than it is to a normal woman. I am not writing of what ought to be, but of what is. Sex is an enormous physiological burthen for a woman, but not, it would seem, in most cases, such a mental burthen, and it does not last out her lifetime as it does a man's. But for a normally constituted man woman is the natural symbol of life, and he cannot live fully and happily without her companionship and reassurance. She has a material need of his strength and his greater power over resources, but he is dependent upon her for gifts of peace and encouragement that cannot be covenanted for.

Nature's way has always been a paradoxical way, and it is a fundamental fact in this connection that as human life struggles up from the instinctive level we find no prepared adjustment of woman's mind to man's. There is no feminine mind different from and reciprocal to a man's mind. They are both, man's mind and woman's mind alike, in the form of pure egotism. As the life of man becomes more civilised and mental, his need for an adequate helpmeet increases. He can no longer get along with a woman bought or captured and set to her special business in the harem. But while his need for a free and willing helpmeet increases and his demands upon her expand, we find no corresponding disposition in able women to co-operate with men. They seem to want to drop their sex and set up as imitations of all the successful male types. They become a new sex of little aggressive pseudo-men. They want to wear the wig of the judge and carry the mace in just the same spirit that makes the dressmaker adapt soldiers' uniforms and turn the djibba of a dervish into a coquettish garment. They want to substitute

Great Women for Great Men in our histories and turn out Buddha and Mahomet and Christ in favour of feminine equivalents. They will presently want a Lady God in a world in which the male will be a fading memory. It will be a parallel and parodied world. That is what makes this tumultuous eager book so significant and so dismaying. It is an incoherent silly sort of book, but it is written in deadly earnest. It is probably widely representative. It expresses very typically a vast movement towards non-co-operation which will involve the profoundest changes in our social life. But it would take up far beyond the limitations set to newspaper articles to discuss the possible treaty that may at last end this profound instinctive breach.

LIII

Living through: the truth about an interview

6.9.24

It is a foolish thing for a writer to see an interviewer. Other men may want an intermediary to tell the world of their thoughts and intentions, but a writer should be able to do his own telling. Yet I am always falling again into this folly.

They come along with such nice introductions. They are so young and respectful and reassuring. They do not make it clear that they mean to turn your unguarded civilities into an article until quite at the end of the encounter.

And then arrives the interview, with one's casual suggestions made into oracular statements, clothed in uncongenial and sometimes horrible phrases, and mixed up with one's visitor's ideas and—amplifications. And everybody takes notice of it and judges one by it. One's writings may be as copious as the Nile in flood, but nobody ever seems to get concerned about what one says in *them*. But let loose an interview, and people quote your alleged utterances as though they were your most polished thoughts, write articles rubbing in the young gentleman's choicest phrases, preach sermons

reproving your unwonted expressions. They seem to feel that at last they have really got you.

I write with one occasion fresh in my mind. A little while ago an interviewer told the world that I said the next few years will be an age of fun—the world was tired of tragedy. For my own part I was to write funny books henceforth.... I shall probably never hear the last of that.

Oddly enough I do not remember that particular interviewer at all distinctly, nor what friend's introduction it was let him in on me. I shouldn't know him again. But I do remember the conversation to which he gave this astonishing twist. I remember my train of thought because it is one that has been rather frequently with me nowadays.

He had tried to get me talking of the extravagant horrors of the Next Great War. I suppose he thought I should talk impossible rubbish about bombs as big as houses and whole cities destroyed by poison gas and so forth, and he would be able to retail this monstrous stuff half jeeringly and half credulously. At any rate, I found myself talking of the improbability of there ever being a war in Europe even so mechanically destructive as the last war. The Great War had been the explosion of a vast accumulation of energy, moral and social as well as material. Europe might, and probably would, bicker, murder, bomb, massacre, and starve, but for another generation at least she would not have either the spirit or the discipline or the material to produce such munitions and such wide-sweeping concerted action as devastated her in the Great War. She is morally and physically bankrupt and prostrate. She may go on sinking, as Asia Minor sank, back even to barbarism. Even if she does not do so, it will take forty or fifty years to reassemble energy for another such world-wide outbreak.

I went on to talk of the disappointment of the peace. Which had failed us most, intelligence or moral force? Both had failed us. For four years now Europe had been disintegrating. This poor League of Nations at Geneva, snubbed and brow-beaten by the French and Italians, who belonged to it and did not believe in it, and distrusted and hated by the excluded Russians and Germans, seemed to confirm the futility of any constructive effort. Things grew worse instead of better. Tariffs, currency manipulation, the cost of armaments, were destroying urban and industrial life under our eyes.

The parasitic speculator flourished; the peasant in his self-centred way held on; the rest faded out. If one did not foresee another Great War one foresaw the certainty of endless little ones.

And so talking, and perhaps a little forgetful of my hearer, sitting almost knee to knee, intent to translate whatever he could catch of my talk and hand it out in his own phrases and colouring, I recalled a conversation I had had quite recently in Paris with my friend Philippe Millet, who is now dead. We were old friends. We had talked about the affairs of the world in Paris both before the war and during the war and at Washington during the Conference; and even in 1921 at Washington we could still believe that the Western world in which we were born and by which we lived might yet make an effort sufficiently creative and generous to save itself and develop a new and greater phase of civilisation. I was then publicly denouncing the French for their trust in submarines and Senegalese, but that made no difference in our mutual good will. He understood the spirit that moved me. But this last summer, when we met for the last time, Millet was an ailing and disillusioned man.

"My dear Wells," he said, "you expect too much of this world. In the early part of the war there was splendid heroism and devotion—especially among the young. And they died. That was tragedy. But there is no tragedy now. There is nothing left great enough in Europe now for tragedy. It is a comedy now, a grotesque comedy of haggling and bargaining while the ship sinks. The sinking makes no difference. Absurd and preposterous people will still remain absurd and preposterous, even when they are running about on a sinking ship that they will not even observe to be sinking." It was a point of view I had been approaching, but which it needed the push of his assertion for me to reach. It is a seizing and desolating point of view.

Suppose it is true that this system in which we live in Europe, the system of national sovereignty reacting upon an economic system of privately owned, profit-seeking capital, is entirely unteachable and inadaptable. Suppose its competitions are incurably destructive. Suppose there is indeed nothing sufficient to arrest this decay. Suppose that in consequence all Europe has to go on breaking down as Russia has broken down, as Germany breaks down, as Poland and Hungary will probably soon break down, with no sufficient

attempt at transition or reconstruction, then what are we to do—we who have some vision of what is happening? How are we going to live through it? Whole generations may have to live through it.

I think that we are justified in saving ourselves as far as possible. I think we are bound to do whatever we can to salvage science and art and social experience against the days when the breakdown reaches its final phase and a real rebuilding is possible. I think we have to do all we can to maintain and extend an educational process and educational methods that will lay the foundations of a new order, a civilisation of service. And to do such things at all effectively we must keep our minds as sweet as we can and press our purposes as good-temperedly as possible.

"Grotesque comedy"!—in a world of that quality we must not simply "live dangerously," but humorously. With aggressive wealth and canting patriotism floundering destructively about us, in an atmosphere of catchwords and wild misconceptions, with masses of people angry, distressed, and misinformed, and with worse to follow, the straight path to martyrdom is a mere evasion of our responsibilities. You cannot make a new world in gaols and exile; you must make it in schools and books, in Legislatures and business affairs, humorously, obstinately, and incessantly. This monstrous, distressful, pathetic, but preposterous social disarticulation is too intricate and complicated for any simple act or any simple formula to avail. We must all do what we can, but our best efforts may, after all, be not so much right as *right-ish*. It would be hard enough to struggle in a world in which other people did not understand, but in which we at least were sure we were right; it is infinitely harder to struggle, as many of us are doing now, with a realisation that our own understanding is limited and faulty.

In such circumstances a jest, laughter, may come as relief, as illumination. Of all men of modern times, I am inclined to think Lincoln was the greatest. He held on; he, more than anyone, saved the unity of the New World. And throughout the worst of that dark and weary struggle against disruption he joked, he told stories. Nobody has ever attempted yet to make an anthology of those extraordinary stories. But they were of infinite benefit to him and the

world. They kept him supple. They saved him from the rigor of a pose.

And now, in still darker and more perplexing times, our need for the flexible reconciliations of humour is still greater....

To this effect I thought aloud in the presence of the bright young man who had come to make an interview out of me. He thanked me profusely, won my foolish permission to write something about our “most inspiring” talk, and went out to report to the world that the notorious prophet foretold an age of fun, and was, so to speak, painting his nose for the festival.

LIV

The creative passion

13.9.24

Do men and women generally want a better world than this?

Do they want a world free from war, general economic security, a higher level of general health, long life, freedom and hope for everyone, beauty as the common quality of their daily lives?

The conventional answer to that question, especially if you put it to a public meeting with the appropriate gestures, is “Of course they do.”

But the true answer is, “Not much!”

They may do so when they read an inspiring book by the fireside or hear a rousing speech, but they do not do so all round the twenty-four hours, or, indeed, at any time when there is any possibility of helping to realise such generous desires. “They,” I write, but I should write “we.” For we all are much of the same quality; the tallest man in the world is not much more than twice the height of the shortest, and the crime for which the murderer dies is just the concrete realisation of the saint’s flash of anger. We are all but very little above egotism; our passions are warm only when they are immediate. I do not believe there has ever been a man who has lived steadfastly,

continuously, and completely in pursuit of great ends. We are all vain, amenable to flattery, stirred by physical impulses, by the competitive instinct and jealousy, by anger at opposition, liable to fatigue, irritation, and uncontrollable and sometimes quite unaccountable fluctuations of motive.

Simple people like to believe there are Great Men in the world who are altogether above this tangle of drive and impulse. But indeed there are no such divinities.

What do we all find in our hearts? An immense self-love, a tremendous concentration of our attention upon our personal drama, physical cravings bare and physical cravings disguised and sublimated, desire to possess, desire for securities, and such-like fear-begotten desires, a desire for praise and approval and an instinctive dread of the disapproval and hostility of our fellow-men, an aggressive pride and self-assertion so soon as fear is allayed. We find, too, imitative impulses, competitive impulses—jealousy. In most cases there is also an extension of our egotism to cover our offspring, our dear ones, our friends and near kin. It is an extension of our egotism rather than a suppression of it. Is not that the drive and quality of most of our living?

How much of that complex of motives can be used to bind men together into a civilised state? One can no doubt play upon their fears, represent the dangers of conquest and cruelty by hostile peoples so vividly as to make them fight and compel others to fight for them in great wars, rally them to the flag in a state of panic, fill them with that frantic distrust and hate of strangers which is the basis of vulgar “Patriotism.” With a little coercion one may even get them to pay national taxes under the influence of these same mass-fears. The human animal is a semi-social animal, and though you cannot stampede it, as the American bison used to be stampeded, to rush over cliffs in a heaped herd-suicide, or like the Russian lemming to swarm into the sea and be drowned; yet it can be got moving in masses for collective ends, either good ends or bad ends, in an only very slightly rational manner.

But though these human motives I have cited so far do serve to keep us human beings together in smaller and larger communities with a sort of mutual restraint and help and tolerance, they supply no

real force for any progressive betterment of human relations, and still less do they supply any driving force to organise and maintain a higher order of civilisation throughout the world.

As soon as the mass urgency subsides we tend to relapse into our own little personal lives of eating, drinking, and “having a good time,” of “getting on,” of posing to ourselves and others, of thinking and talking ourselves into agreeable states of self-approval, of doing pleasantly spiteful things to people we dislike. And if there is nothing more in our human composition than these common impulses of the everyday life, this coarse stuff of our common humanity, then all our talk and writing about a world peace and a higher civilisation is just dream stuff and nonsense. If that is all we are then we have no more chance of escaping more wars, more famines and disorders, cruelties, and diseases than a trainload of hogs bound for Chicago has of escaping the stockyard. None of the hogs may like the journey to the stockyard, or their experiences when they get there; that does not help them in the slightest degree to escape their destiny.

But there is something more in humanity than this, and it is this something more that transfuses all our life, our politics, our business and social organisation, with the colour of romance and the quality of a great adventure. Let me take two common incidents to show the kind of “something more” that I mean—the something more in which all our hopes reside.

It is night on the embankment of a river that flows through a great city, and a commonplace youngster leans over the parapet watching and thinking. Great warehouses, tall buildings, a tower or so, three or four graceful bridges, one beyond the other, set with bright lights and bearing a luminous traffic, drop their images into the stream, and each light they bear makes a long, slightly wavering reflection upon the smooth black water. A little steam-launch, just blackness and a red head-lamp, fusses by. As it passes it tears through these tranquil banks of lamp reflections, drags a trail of startled and trembling shreds of light behind it, flings them apart, elongates them, re-unites them, weaves them into a dancing pattern that changes every moment into a fresh intricacy. Splash, splash, splash, comes the impact of the little boat’s wash against the embankment. The

youngster, struck with a strange wonder of beauty, watches these changes, tries to follow them, tries to detect the law of their dexterous, wonderful rearrangements. All the heat and egotism of his personal life are forgotten. He is lifted outside all our everyday scheme of motives. He is possessed by the desire to know and understand.

Every one of us has had such moments of pure mental desire. For most of us they pass; we are too busy and preoccupied. Some few of us they seize upon and make into those devotees of inquiry, men of science.

Now take my second instance, a row of yards behind a row of mean houses in the same great city. Scarcely one of these yards is neglected or purely utilitarian. In more than half of them are evidences of effort to make some sort of garden or arbour or such-like pleasant and orderly arrangement. You rarely see people playing in these yards or resting in them; they are overlooked by a railway and very noisy. But nevertheless there you have the plainest evidence of an impulse to order and make, the rudiment of the garden-making, house-building impulse. In most of these yards it has been an unprofitable, useless, and perhaps disappointing effort, but it has been at work there. In nearly every man and woman there is something of this same garden-making, arbour-building impulse. Here again is a second impersonal motive to which we can turn from the personal and jealous passions that commonly possess us. It is an ennobling motive; witness the face of a skilful painter or carpenter intent upon his work.

Now this desire for knowledge and the impulse to make are the really hopeful creative forces in human life. They are the something more and the something different, on which I base all my hopes. Submerged and undeveloped, overridden by competition, fear, jealousy, vanity, they are yet to be found in nearly all of us. The aim of true education is to release them, nourish them, give them power and the possibility of co-operation. In this possibility lies our sole hope that the ultimate fate of mankind, now packed in its nationalist trucks upon the railroad of nationalism, warfare, and economic selfishness, will not be the same as that of those hogs upon their way to Chicago.

LV

After a year of journalism: an outbreak of auto-obituary

20.9.24

Fifty-four articles have I written in the past twelve months and this will be the fifty-fifth and last. I desist. I turn over the book into which my secretary with a relentless regularity has pasted them all. Some I like; most seem to be saying something quite acceptable to me, but imperfectly in a rather ill-fitting form; some are just bad. My admiration for the masters of journalism has grown to immense proportions after these efforts. Their confidence! Their unstrained directness! Their amazing certainty of their length! And their unfaltering quality!

I had never realised before the tremendous hardship of periodicity. Every week or every day the writer must chew the cud of events and deliver his punctual copy. Every day, wet or fine, the newspaper sheet must be filled: filled, but not congested. But it is only now and then that the phase is good for really happy writing. Sometimes everything is germinating, but nothing seems to happen; at others a dozen issues compete for attention. Now one does not want to write because there is nothing to stimulate one to utterance; now because

one wants time to consider some dominating event. But the columns stand waiting. Henceforth for my poor irregular brain there shall be no more periodicity.

I look over these articles and suddenly there joins on to my sense of them the fact that on my table are lying the proofs of a collected edition of my writings; eight and twenty fat volumes they will make. I perceive I have already lived a long, industrious life. I celebrate my death as a periodic journalist—and these proofs extend the obituary sense beyond the scope of that event. If I am not actually tucked up in my literary death-bed I am at least sitting on it. Possibly I may yet take a few more airings before I send for the clergyman and the heirs and turn in for good and start blessing and forgiving people from my pillow, but the longer part is finished. What does it all amount to, that mass of written matter?

The gist of it is an extraordinarily sustained and elaborated adverse criticism of the world as it is, a persistent refusal to believe that this is the best or even the most interesting of all possible worlds. There is a developing attempt culminating in the *Outline of History* to show that the world of men is only temporarily what it is, and might be altered to an enormous extent. There is a search through every sort of revolutionary project and effort for the material for conclusive alteration. The total effect of these articles and these books of mine on my mind, is of a creature trying to find its way out of a prison into which it has fallen.

I recall how that in my boyhood I made a little prison of paper and cardboard for a beetle, and how I heard the poor perplexed beast incessantly crawling and scratching and fluttering inside. I forget what became of it. Perhaps I gave it its freedom; perhaps it pressed and worried at the corners where the light came through, and made an enlarged hole and worried its own way out. But I remember the dirty scratches and traces of its explorations on the unfolded paper cage. To a larger mind these books and articles of mine will seem very like those markings.

Implicit behind and beyond all these writings there is faith in a great “outside.” I do believe there is a better life for such creatures as we are, and betterment for our race and an escape from the meanness, the dullness, the petty doomed life of this time. So far as

I can go beyond my untrained feelings and my unsolved limitations I give myself to the attack upon our common prison walls of ignorance and effortless submission. In all these articles and books there is the thrust of the natural and conscious and convinced revolutionary. I am against the clothes we wear and the food we eat, the houses we live in, the schools we have, our amusements, our money, our ways of trading, our ways of making, our compromises and agreements and laws, our articles of political association, the British Empire, the American Constitution. I think most of the clothes ugly and dirty, most of the food bad, the houses wretched, the schools starved and feeble, the amusements dull, the monetary methods silly, our ways of trading base and wasteful, our methods of production piecemeal and wasteful, our political arrangements solemnly idiotic. Most of my activities have been to get my soul and something of my body out of the customs, outlook, boredoms, and contaminations of the current phase of life.

I am not so very exceptional in this. Endless people find the present world—in spite of storms of natural beauty, in spite of the irregular delightful revelations of human possibility—almost intolerable. Indeed I do not know how far the occasional intense loveliness of nature and the rare gleams of human dearness and greatness, do not exacerbate their general discontent. They struggle to get away from it. Drink—"the shortest way out of Manchester," as someone called it—a vicious pursuit of excitement, opiates and religious devotion, a widespread indulgence of reverie, are all forms of escape from the cruel flatness of uninspired days. But none of them, unless it be the religious excitement, give more than a temporary respite. When the orgy is over comes the awakening still in the cage. But in the idea of revolution which does not forget the cage, but realises its impermanence, there is an enduring support for the spirit.

My imagination takes refuge from the slums of to-day in a world like a great garden, various, orderly, lovingly cared-for, dangerous still but no longer dismal, secure from dull and base necessities. I have come to believe in the complete possibility of such a world, and to realise the broad lines upon which we can work for its attainment through a great extension of the scientific spirit to the mental field,

and through a deliberate reconstruction of social and economic life upon the framework of a new, far-reaching educational organisation. By projecting my mind forward to that greater civilisation I do succeed in throwing a veil of unreality over the solemn ineptitude of to-day and the complete identification of myself and my insufficiencies and disappointments with the quality of common things. By insisting that I can be a creative revolutionary I escape from acquiescence in what I am and what things are. To live under the rule of King George or President Coolidge and under the sway of current customs, habits and usages, can be made tolerable by the recognition of their essential transitoriness and their ultimate insignificance. And in no other way can it be made tolerable to anyone with a sense of beauty and a passion for real living.

This is what I have been saying in these eight and twenty volumes of collected works and in this yearful of newspaper articles, and after a rest it is quite possible I shall go on saying it some more. But after these reflections upon my literary death-bed I think I shall take a holiday—at least from journalism—for a time. If there is anything worse in this way than periodic journalism it must be preaching and having to go into a pulpit with half an hour's supply of uplift fresh and punctual every Sunday.

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Transcriber's Notes

Minor errors in punctuation were fixed.

Page 19: "than she has even been" changed to "than she has ever been"

Page 95: "the policy of a great nations" changed to "the policy of a great nation"

Page 153: "the citizens of the United States as a sort of transplanted Britisher" changed to "the citizen of the United States as a sort of transplanted Britisher"

Page 230: "war aviator and machines" changed to "war aviators and machines"

Page 286: "not esentially different" changed to "not essentially different"

Page 308: "on one have a right" changed to "no one have a right"

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